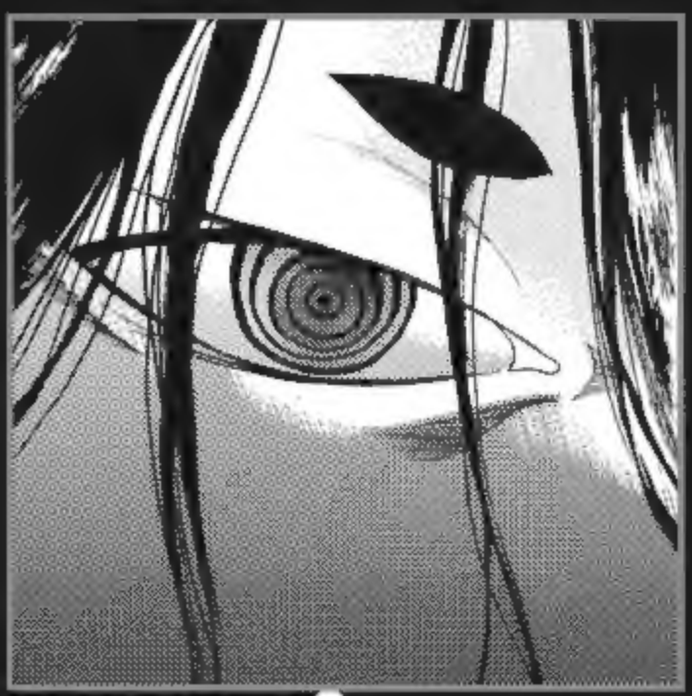
CORPSE PRINCESS
YOSHIICHI AKAHITO
5

CORPSE PRINCESS



VENGEFUL SPIRITS/ANCESTRAL SPIRITS (NOUN)

In ancient Japan, the Imperial Court and nation as a whole would often be cursed by vengeful spirits (resentful ghosts who caused natural disasters). In order to stop these curses and the calamities they wrought, the ghosts were revered as "ancestral spirits," pacified, and laid to rest. Vengeful spirits of noble origin tended to be the strongest.

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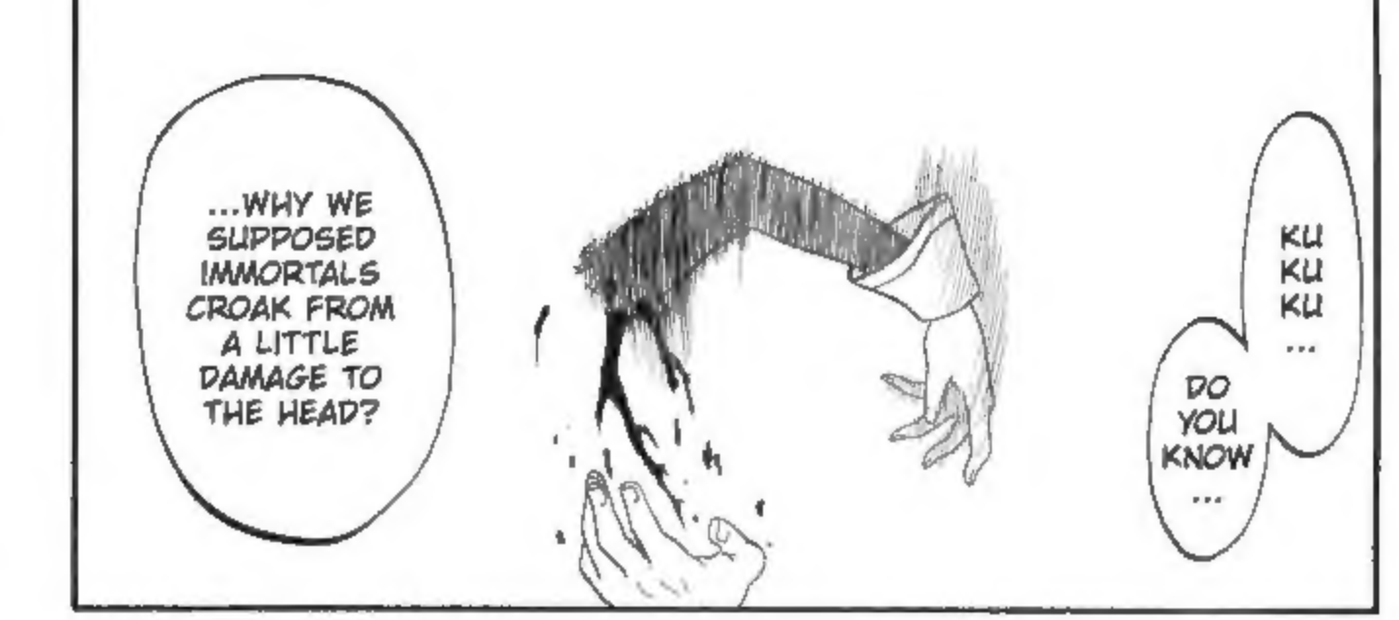

KU KU KU ...
DO YOU KNOW ...
...WHY WE SUPPOSED IMMORTALS CROAK FROM A LITTLE DAMAGE TO THE HEAD?

WELL, DO YOU?
DEATH 20: ROYAL THRONE

IT'S 'COS ...
.....
...OUR CURSES COME FROM HERE.

BULGE
BUT THE BRAIN ...
BULGE
AS LONG AS WE'VE GOT THAT, SHIKABANE CAN FIGHT WITH CURSES.
ARMS AND LEGS CAN'T CURSE ANYTHING.
TWITCH
AND OUR ORGANS MIGHT AS WELL BE MADE OF PLASTIC.
BURST
.....YEAH?

...I'LL BREAK YOU.
LICK
SHOW ME A CURSE.
WITH WHAT BRAIN YOU'VE GOT LEFT... IF NOT...
AIN'T THAT RIGHT, BRAT?
HAA.

DEATH 20: ROYAL THRONE

STEP
TCH.
STEP
STEP—
AHH
.....
SLAM
SLAM
SLAM
WHIP
!!
WHAM
TAKA—
GAH
!!
SKID
SKID

SCRAPE
GA HA ...
HAA.
CRACK
WEAK.
PA-THETIC.
KERSLAM
CRUNCH
AHH !!
TCH.
...I'LL HAVE TO USE MY SEALED MANDALA .....
.....BUT...
IF WE'RE TO GET OUT OF THIS ALIVE.....
ITSUKI..... SHIT!!
JANGLE
CRACK

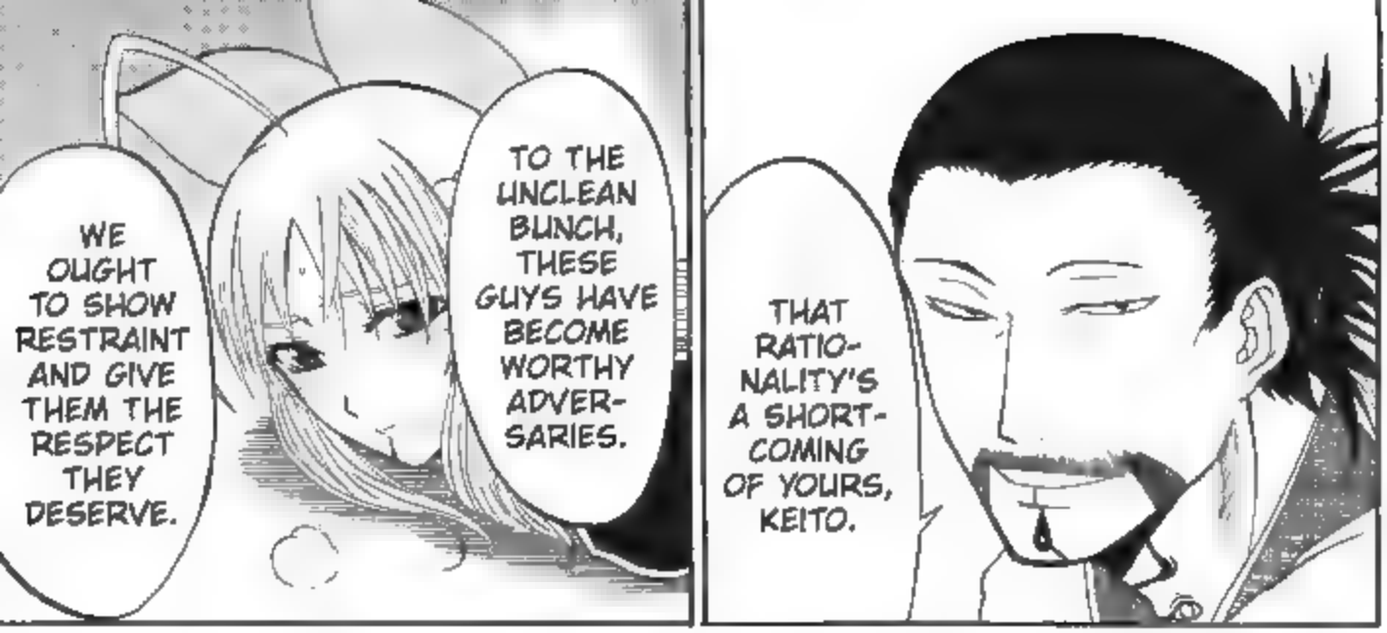
BAM
RUMBLE
!?
SWISH

SHIT.....!
BACKUP .....?
.....HMPH.
ALL FINISHED? THE GOD-KILLER?
HEY, KEITO.
PLAYTIME'S OVER. WE'RE HEADING BACK.
KING!?
.....!!! WHAT THE.....?
...OUR KING WILL ONCE AGAIN MANIFEST IN THIS WORLD.
AT LAST ...
EVERY-THING'S PREPARED, NOW.
YEAH.

STAND
ALL THE LAWS AND BOUNDARIES OF THIS WORLD WILL BE SMASHED.
IN THEIR PLACE WILL RISE A "KINGDOM OF THE DEAD."
WHEN OUR KING RE-TURNS ...

AS YOU CAN SEE, IT LOOKS LIKE I'M OUT OF TIME TO PLAY WITH YOU.
KU KU.
SORRY, MONK.

.....
WHAT, HAZAMA ?
WRAP
!
.....BUT DON'T WORRY.
CRACK
AFTER I'VE KILLED YOU, I'LL SEND YOUR FRIENDS TO JOIN YOU.


TO THE UNCLEAN BUNCH, THESE GUYS HAVE BECOME WORTHY ADVER-SARIES.
WE OUGHT TO SHOW RESTRAINT AND GIVE THEM THE RESPECT THEY DESERVE.
THAT RATIO-NALITY'S A SHORT-COMING OF YOURS, KEITO.

ANOTHER OF LIFE'S AMUSE-MENTS.
KU KU KU ...
IT WAS TOYING WITH THEM LIKE THAT THAT GOT IZUWA KILLED.
... YOU AN IDIOT ?

...
YOU'VE EXPERIENCED THE PLEASURE OF ANNIHILATION.
YOU ONCE GAVE YOUR LIFE FIGHTING FOR THE KING, NO?
YOU OF ALL PEOPLE ...

STILL ...
.....
HOW KIND OF YOU.
YOU'RE A TOUGH BASTARD, AND THERE'S NO POINT IN US KILLING EACH OTHER.
WRENCH
... TCH.
WHAT-EVER.

THAT'S A LOAD OF CRAP !!
YOU TRASH !!
FUHOOM
!!
PIERCE
PIERCE
PIERCE
SLAM
SKID
SKID
SKID
SKID

MY, MY..... HE'S AN ARCHER, JUST AS YOU WERE BEFORE YOU DIED.
YOU OUGHT TO BE GENTLER WITH THE BOY .....
SWISH
HA.
IF HE SURVIVED THAT, HE DESERVES TO LIVE.
TSK TSK.
WHAT A WASTE.
PA-THETIC
.....
TCH.

UNDER-STOOD.
WE'RE LEAVING.

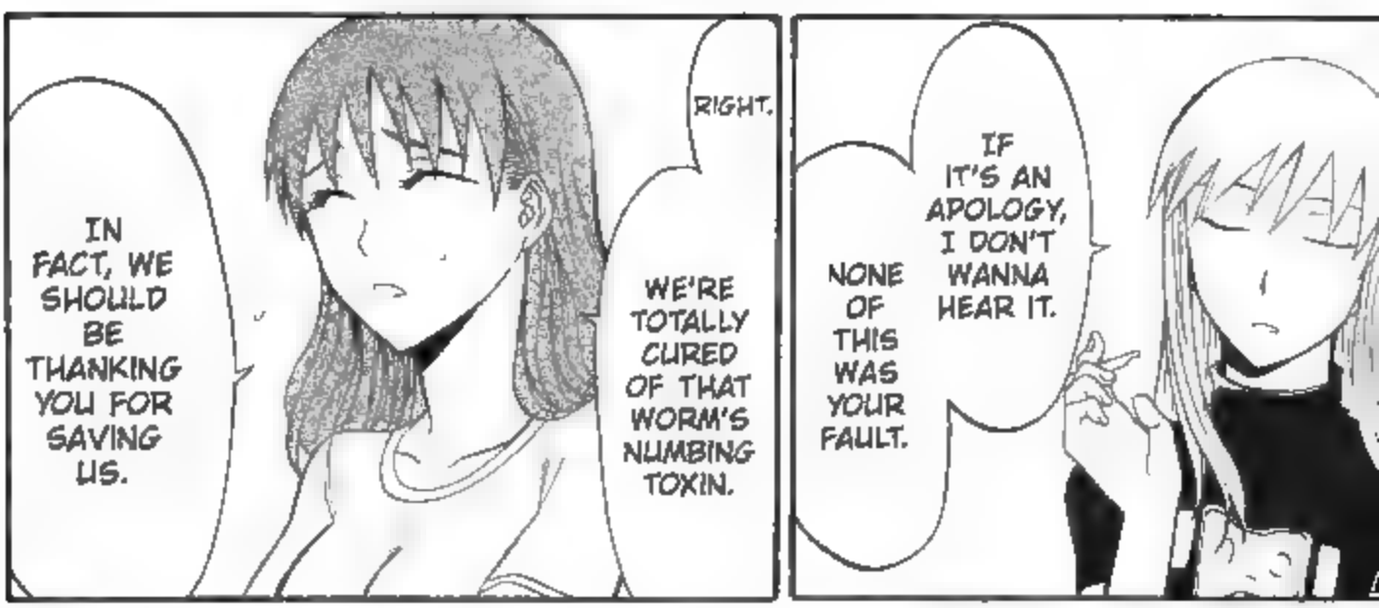
I'M SORRY .....
ITSUKI .....
HAA
COFF
COFF
COFF

MM...
IT'S OKAY.
I'M JUST..... GLAD I MADE IT IN TIME.
SCRAPE
.....SHIT.
I'M ALL BUT USELESS TO YOU, TAKAMASA .....
IT'S ALL BECAUSE. I'M SUCH A WEAK CORPSE PRINCESS
.....THIS WAS A COMPLETE LOSS.....
...BUT WE'LL GET THEM NEXT TIME.
.....RIGHT.

病院
STRETCH
MMM... MM.
DOG
THANKS.
LOOKING GOOD, YOU TWO.
SLIDE
YO.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE READY TO BE DISCHARGED.
HAA. HAA.
WH-WHAT'S THAT, INUHIKO I?
I'M..... GONNA NEED SOME DETAILS, STAT.....
NOT LISTENING
OH. HEY, SUMITORI. WHERE'S OURI?
SO I STARTED PLAYING WITH KASUGA'S BOOBS, BUT THAT JUST MADE ME FEEL ALL SAD AND INFERIOR
SIGH...
MAN, BEING IN THE HOSPITAL WAS SO FREAKING BORING
!!
SPLORT
!!

WHY'RE YOU DOWN IN THE DUMPS, DUMMY?

INU-HIKO .....
GUYS .....
UMM..... I'M.....

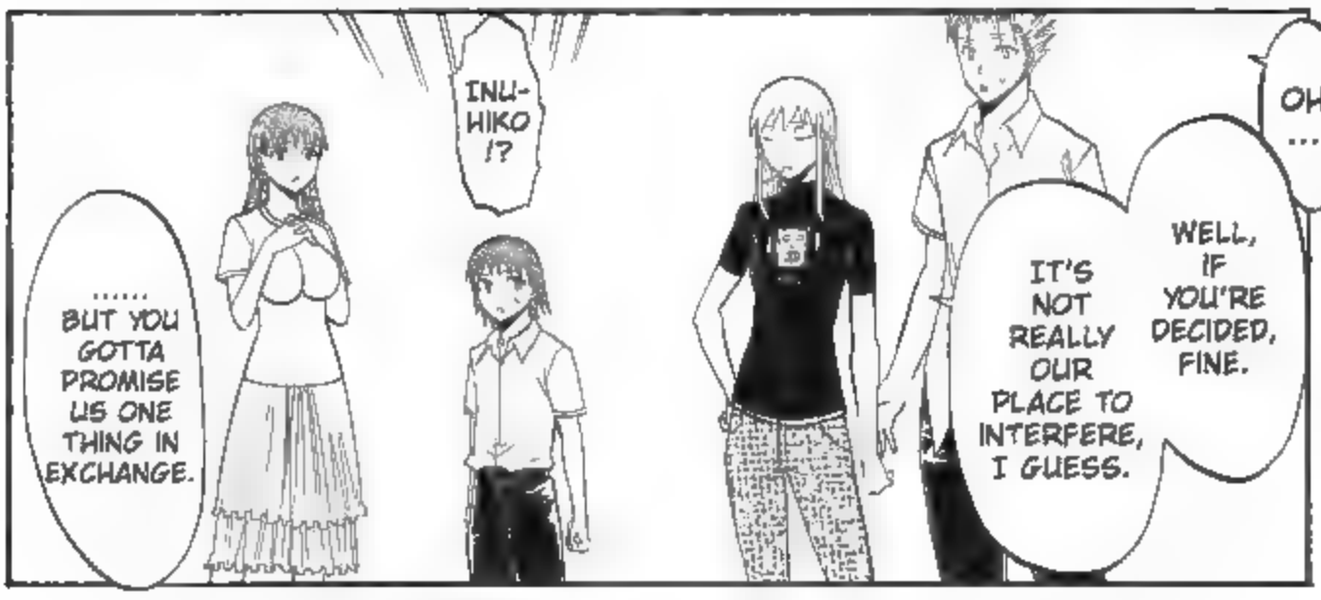

IF IT'S AN APOLOGY, I DON'T WANNA HEAR IT.
NONE OF THIS WAS YOUR FAULT.
RIGHT.
WE'RE TOTALLY CURED OF THAT WORM'S NUMBING TOXIN.
IN FACT, WE SHOULD BE THANKING YOU FOR SAVING US.

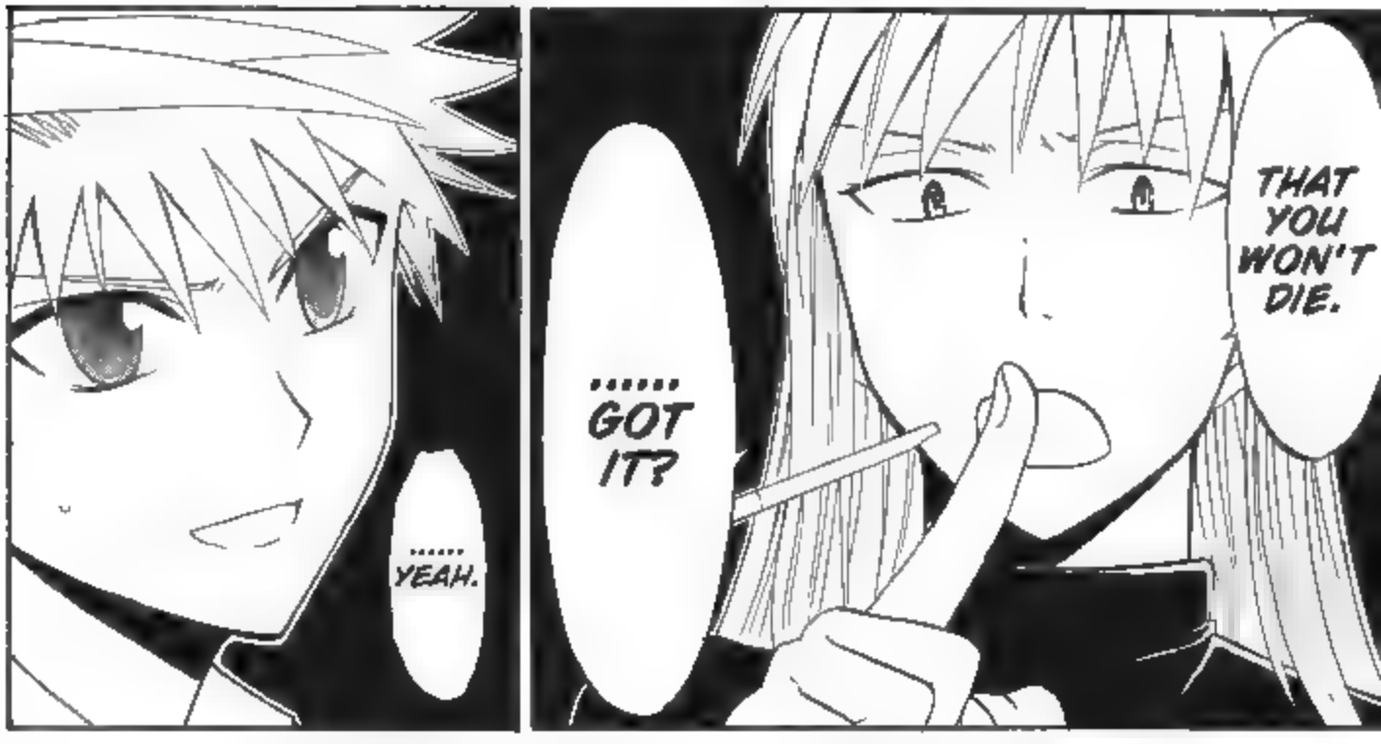
..... NAH.
YOU GUYS GETTING INVOLVED IN ALL THIS.....
IT JUST..... MADE ME EVEN SURER ABOUT THIS DECISION.

I'M.....
...JOINING THE KOUGON SECT.

!?

IT'S.....THE ONLY THING THAT'LL HELP ME UNDERSTAND ALL THIS.....
SO DOES THAT MEAN..... YOU WANNA FIGHT AGAINST THOSE SHIKABANE THINGS?
.....YEAH.
...
AH, SORRY.
!?
OUCH !!
MY FIST HAD A MIND OF ITS OWN.
EHH !?

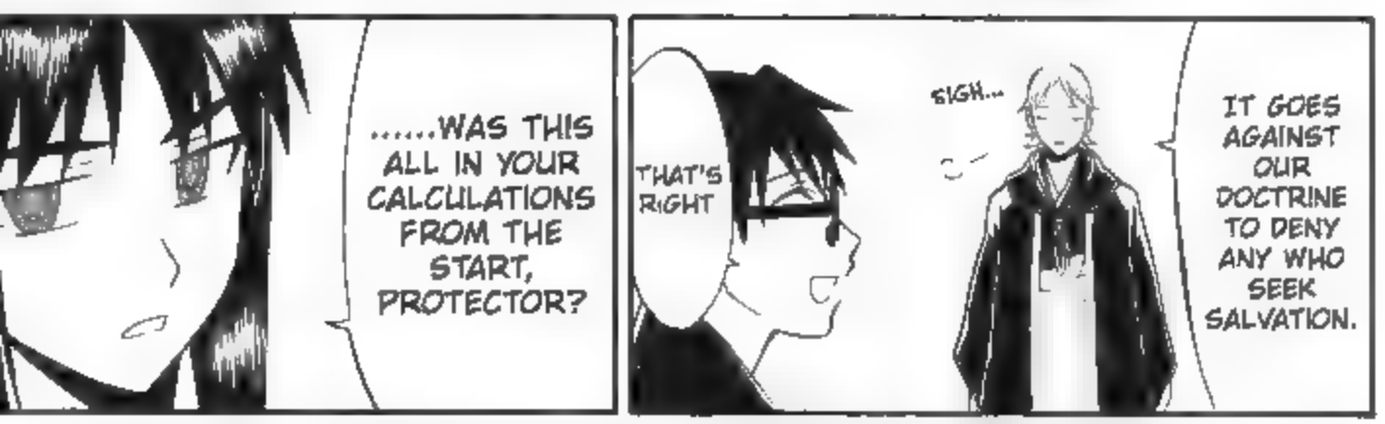

INU-HIKO!?
OH...
WELL, IF YOU'RE DECIDED, FINE.
IT'S NOT REALLY OUR PLACE TO INTERFERE, I GUESS.
.....BUT YOU GOTTA PROMISE US ONE THING IN EXCHANGE.


THAT YOU WON'T DIE.
.....GOT IT?
.....YEAH.

.....
YEAH.
WE'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW.
OKAY.
LET'S BLOW THIS PLACE AND HEAD HOME.

CALL ME TAKA-MASA.
I'M HERE BECAUSE THIS IS OUR HOSPITAL.
..... CAN WE TALK ?
SOUGI-SAN..... WHY'RE YOU HERE?
!
GOOD FRIENDS YOU'VE GOT.
ABOUT..... JOINING US, LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE.
EH?
ARE YOU SURE?
HMPH.
... I'LL DO IT.
IF THAT'S WHAT I'VE GOT TO DO TO KEEP BEING HOSHIMURA-SAN'S CONTRACT HOLDER.....
..... YES.

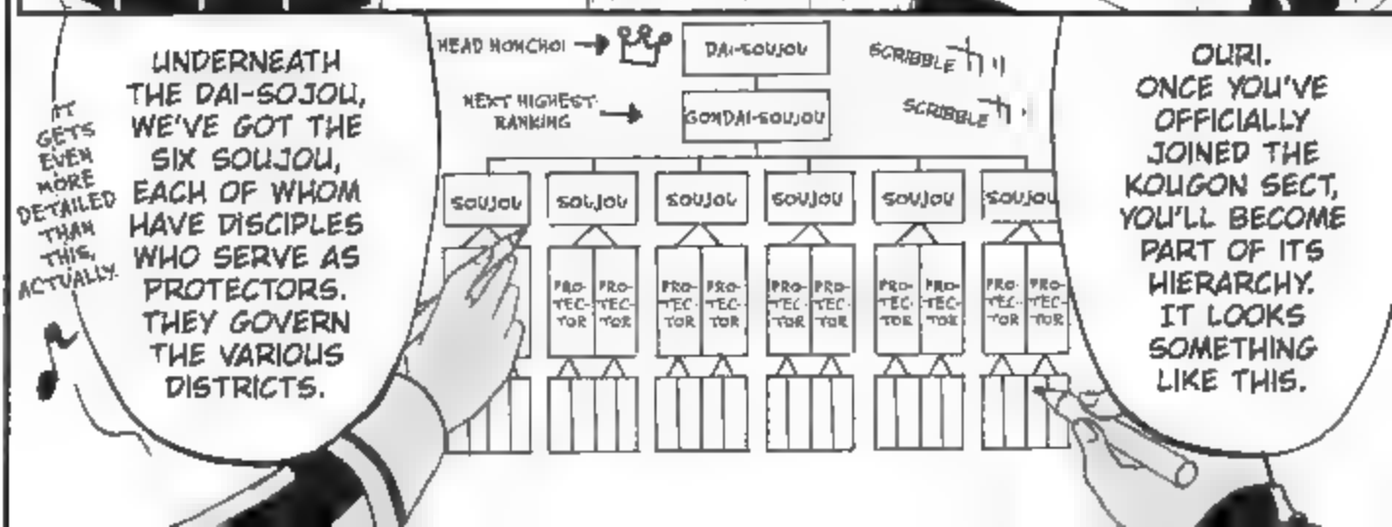
TWO OF OUR MEN DIED IN THE BATTLE TWO DAYS AGO.
!
WORSE ...
...NINE OTHER MONKS WERE MARTYRED AT THE HANDS OF SHIKABANE IN JUST THIS PAST WEEK.
AND WHEN NEXT WE ENCOUNTER OUR GREATEST ENEMY—THE UNCLEAN BUNCH—
MORE MONKS AND CIVILIANS ARE SURE TO DIE.
YET, STILL .....
... YOU WANT TO JOIN US?
..... YES!
I'VE MADE UP MY MIND.

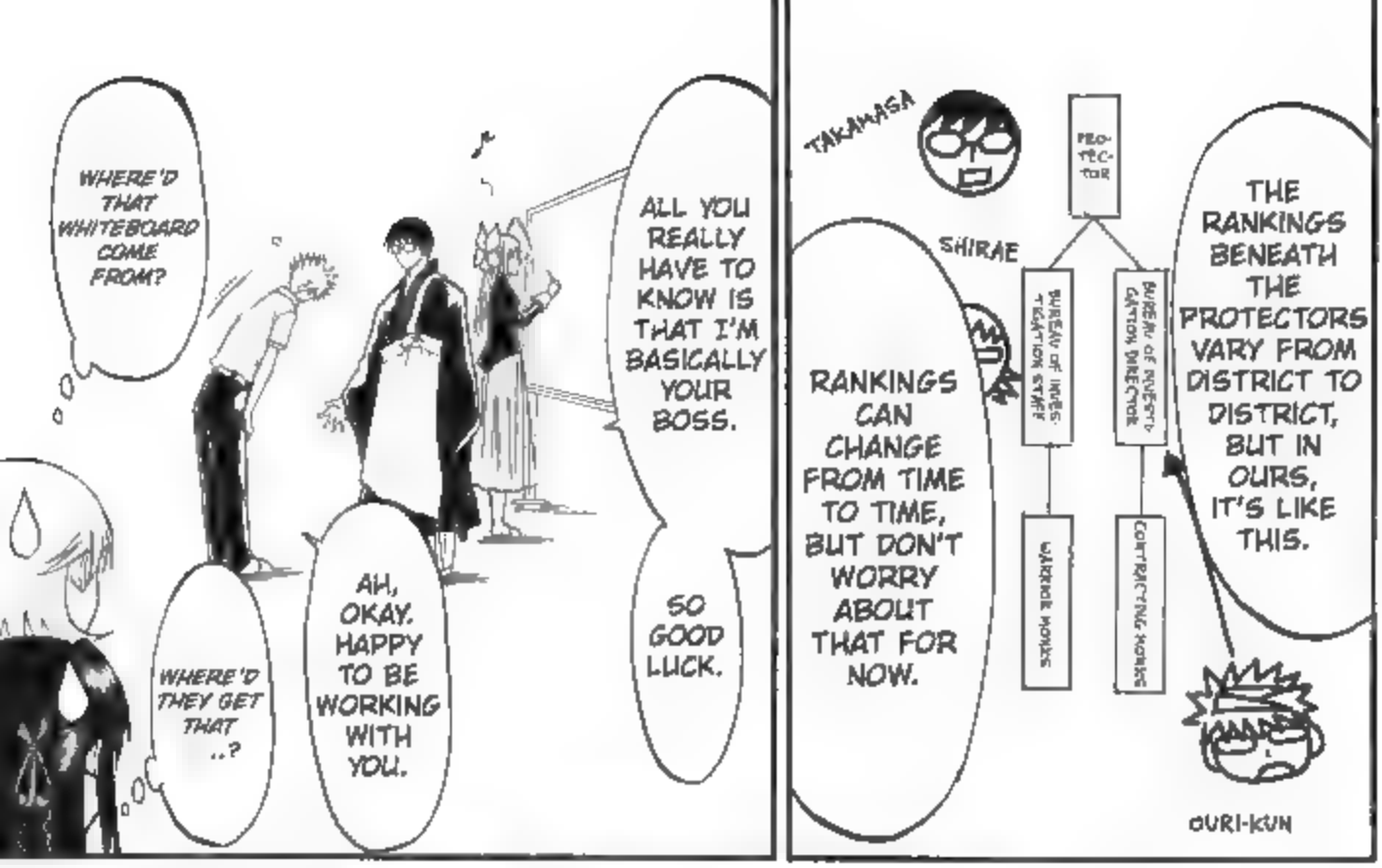

.....WAS THIS ALL IN YOUR CALCULATIONS FROM THE START, PROTECTOR?
THAT'S RIGHT
SIGH...
IT GOES AGAINST OUR DOCTRINE TO DENY ANY WHO SEEK SALVATION.

PAPER: PERMISSION TO ENTER THE FAITH. I HEREBY GRANT PERMISSION TO ONE OURI KAGAMI TO JOIN THE KOUGON SECT. UMEHARA

WELL..... NOW THAT WE'VE GOT A NEW ALLY...
LET'S REIN-TRODUCE OUR-SELVES.
THANK YOU.
IT'S NOTH-ING.
OH, YOU REALLY DID.
THIS GUY .....
HE'S ACTUALLY A VILLAIN .. ...?
WHAT A SCHEMER

AND I AM DIRECTOR OF THE DISTRICT'S BUREAU OF INVESTI-GATION, RINSEN SHIRAE
I'M HIS CORPSE PRINCESS, ITSUKI YAMAGAMI.
I'M TAKAMASA SOUGI, PROTECTOR TO BOTH IKAI AND YANATSU CITY.


IT GETS EVEN MORE DETAILED THAN THIS, ACTUALLY.
UNDERNEATH THE DAI-SOJOU, WE'VE GOT THE SIX SOUJOU, EACH OF WHOM HAVE DISCIPLES WHO SERVE AS PROTECTORS. THEY GOVERN THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS.
HEAD HONCHOI
DAI-SOUJOU
SCRIBBLE
NEXT HIGHEST RANKING
GONDAI-SOUJOU
SCRIBBLE
SOUJOU
PRO-TEC-TOR
OURI. ONCE YOU'VE OFFICIALLY JOINED THE KOUGON SECT, YOU'LL BECOME PART OF ITS HIERARCHY. IT LOOKS SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

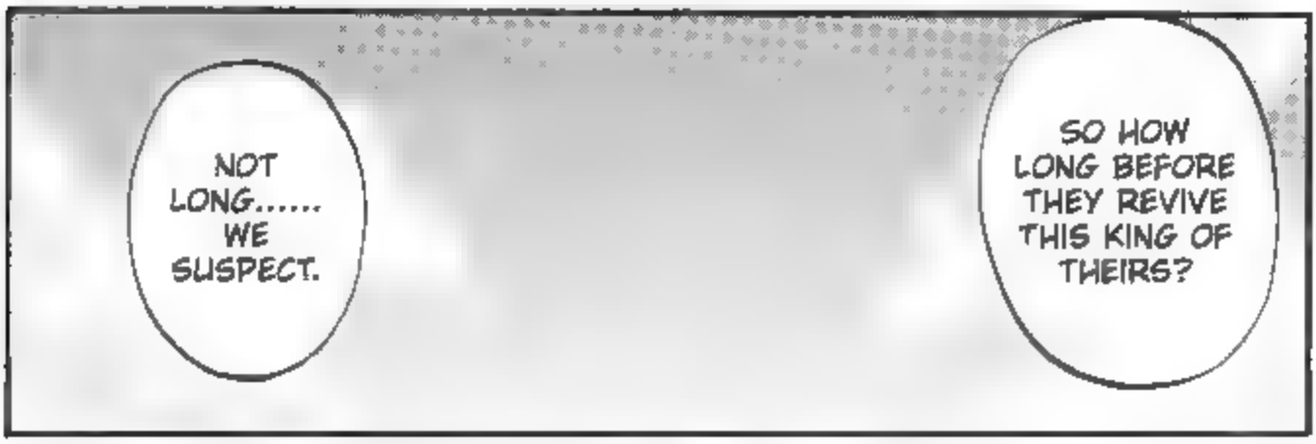

WHERE'D THAT WHITEBOARD COME FROM?
WHERE'D THEY GET THAT ..?
AH, OKAY. HAPPY TO BE WORKING WITH YOU.
ALL YOU REALLY HAVE TO KNOW IS THAT I'M BASICALLY YOUR BOSS.
SO GOOD LUCK.
TAKAMASA
SHIRAE
RANKINGS CAN CHANGE FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT FOR NOW.
PRO-TEC-TOR
BUREAU OF INVESTI-GATION STAFF
BUREAU OF INVESTI-GATION DIRECTOR
WARRIOR HORNS
CONTRACTING HORNS
THE RANKINGS BENEATH THE PROTECTORS VARY FROM DISTRICT TO DISTRICT, BUT IN OURS, IT'S LIKE THIS.
OURI-KUN

RIGHT.
WELL .....
THE EXPLA-NATION, PLEASE, RINSEN.
LET'S MOVE RIGHT ALONG NOW. AND THINK ABOUT COUNTER-MEASURES.

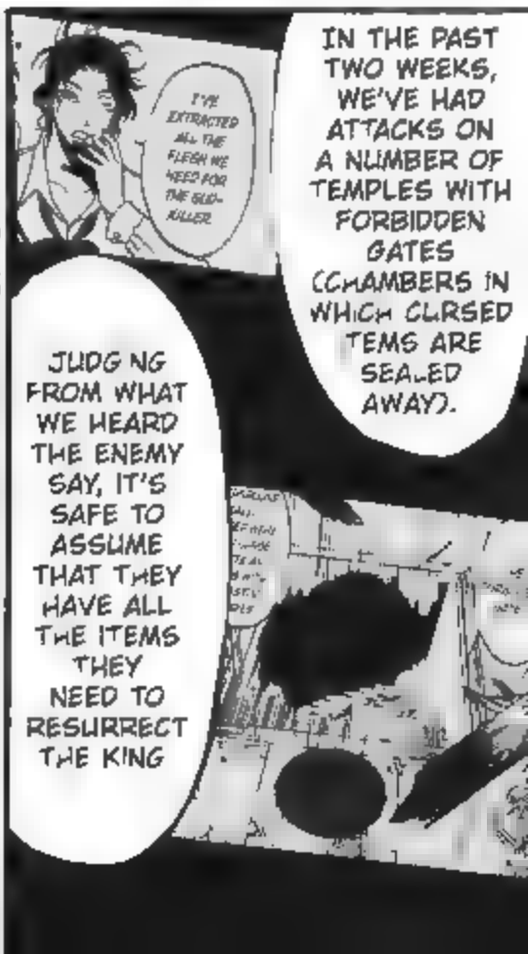
SIMPLY PUT...
...THE RESUR-RECTION OF THEIR SO-CALLED "KING."
A GOAL .....?
SURPRISINGLY, THIS SWARM HAS BEEN FIGHTING AND ACTING IN PURSUIT OF A SINGULAR GOAL.
AT PRESENT, THE BIGGEST THREAT WE NEED TO ELIMINATE IS THE SHIKABANE SWARM THAT CALLS ITSELF THE "UNCLEAN BUNCH."

ONCE THIS KING IS ADDED TO THE UNCLEAN BUNCH'S NUMBERS ...
...THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT THEY'LL REPRESENT AN UNPREC-EDENTED THREAT.

A KING.....? A SHIKABANE ONE.....?
THAT'S RIGHT.
WE DON'T HAVE SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO VENTURE A GUESS AT HIS TRUE IDENTITY YET, BUT.....


SO HOW LONG BEFORE THEY REVIVE THIS KING OF THEIRS?
NOT LONG..... WE SUSPECT.

.....IN OTHER WORDS, ALL THE UNCLEAN BUNCH NEEDS . .
EX-ACTLY.
THE STARS..... THAT IS, THEY'RE WAITING FOR THE RIGHT TIME.


I'VE EXTRACTED ALL THE FLESH WE NEED FOR THE GOD-KILLER.
IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, WE'VE HAD ATTACKS ON A NUMBER OF TEMPLES WITH FORBIDDEN GATES (CHAMBERS IN WHICH CURSED ITEMS ARE SEALED AWAY).
JUDG NG FROM WHAT WE HEARD THE ENEMY SAY, IT'S SAFE TO ASSUME THAT THEY HAVE ALL THE ITEMS THEY NEED TO RESURRECT THE KING

AS HAS BEEN TRUE IN ALL CULTURES THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE MORE COMPLICATED AND GRAND A RITUAL IS...
...THE MORE IT RELIES ON THE STARS..... ON THE POWER OF FATE HUMAN POWER ALONE WILL NOT SUFFICE.
THE TIMING.....IS REALLY THAT IMPORTANT?
YES.

...I EXPECT THEY'LL CHOOSE THE IDEAL TIME.
THE UNCLEAN BUNCH SHOWS DOGGED DEDICATION TO THEIR KING, SO WHEN IT COMES TO HIS REVIVAL...

...OR, ALTER-NATIVELY, DESTROY OR STEAL BACK THE CURSED OBJECTS.
... ELIMINATE THE RITUAL'S CONDUCTOR, AKASHA SHISHIDOU ...
BEFORE THEN, WE MUST DISCOVER THE UNCLEAN BUNCH'S HIDEOUT ...
...ONE AND A HALF MONTHS FROM NOW!!
OUR SUPERIORS ESTIMATE THAT—AT SOONEST—THE RITUAL WILL TAKE PLACE...

THOSE ARE THE GENERAL GUIDELINES OF OUR MISSION FROM HERE ON.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT SHUGO?
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME TO LOSE, THEN .....
HMM .....

MEAN-WHILE ...
...WE'LL MAKE FOR THE MOUNTAIN.

SHIRAE. YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH BUREAU DIRECTORS IN OTHER DISTRICTS AND CONTINUE TO GATHER INTEL.
YES.

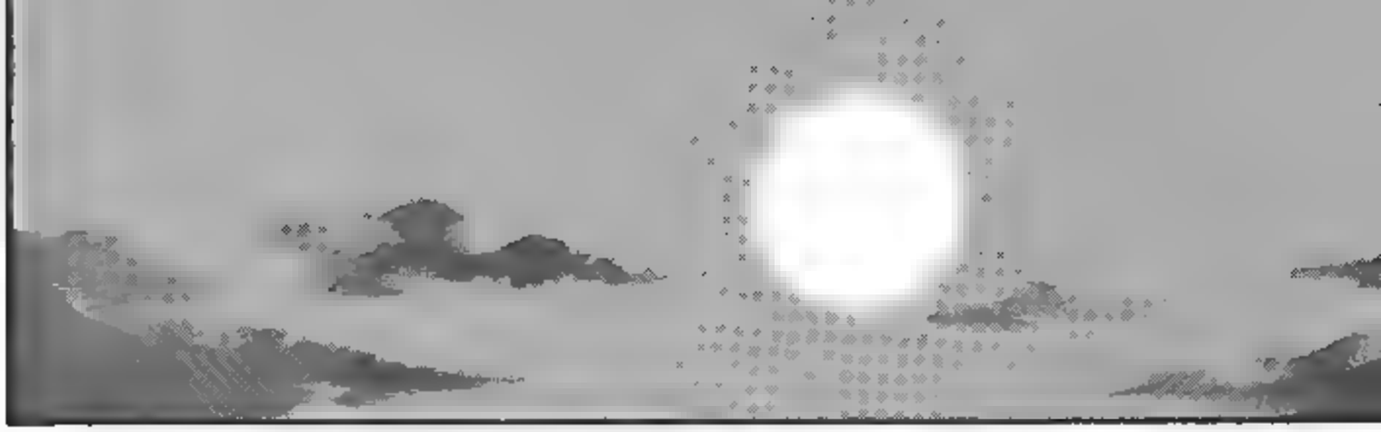
YEAH.
AS I'M SURE YOU'VE ALREADY NOTICED ...
...THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WHEN FIGHTING WITH A CORPSE PRINCESS IS TO AVOID GETTING IN HER WAY.
!

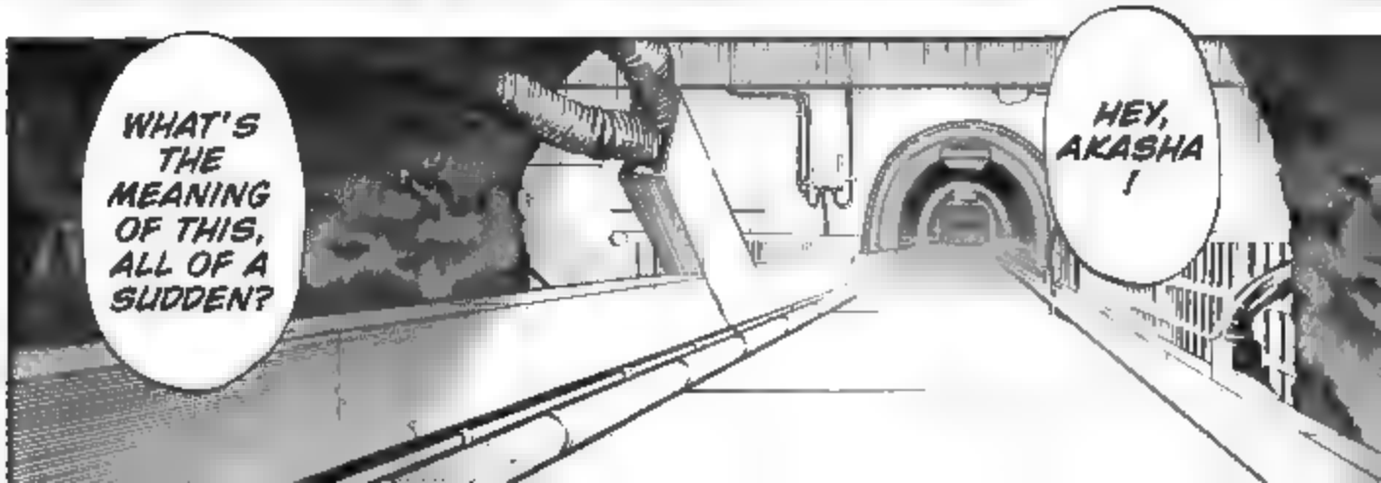
EH ...
A..... MOUNTAIN?
IT'S THE HOLY MOUNTAIN WHERE OUR SECT'S FOUNDER DID HIS TRAINING.
BUT THIS ISN'T JUST ANY MOUN-TAIN.

.....
WE HAVE TO BECOME STRONGER...!
FOR BOTH OUR CORPSE PRINCESSES' SAKES.....
YOU... AND I AS WELL.
ABILITY-WISE, SHIKABANE AND CORPSE PRINCESSES ARE ON PAR WITH EACH OTHER.
THAT MEANS IT'S OFTEN THE CONTRACTING MONK WHO DETERMINES VICTORY OR DEFEAT.

...I NEVER HAVE TO BE THAT WEAK IN FRONT OF HER AGAIN .....
SO THAT.....

...THAT THIS'LL BE OUR ONLY CHANCE TO REALLY GAIN SOME HEADWAY.
IT'S LIKELY .....
TODAY IS JULY 18TH..... PREPARATIONS WILL BE COMPLETE TWO DAYS FROM NOW...
FROM THEN ON, THE REST OF YOUR SUMMER VACATION WILL BE DEDICATED TO TRAINING.
STEP

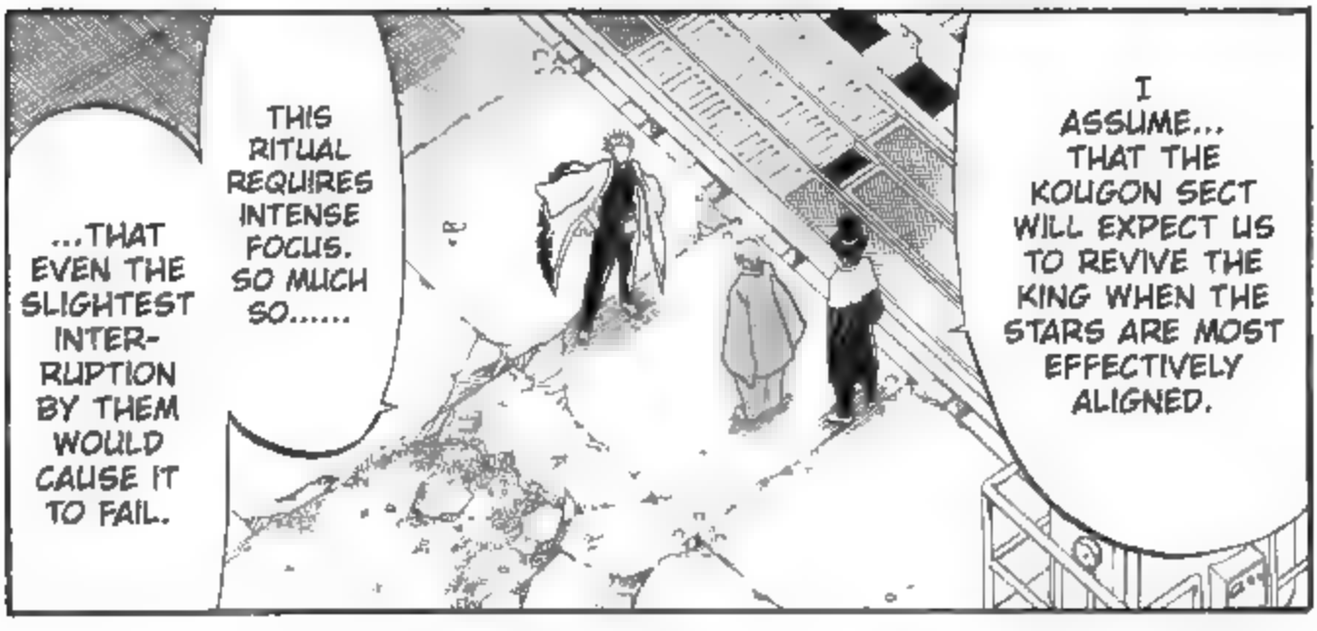



WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS, ALL OF A SUDDEN?
HEY, AKASHA!

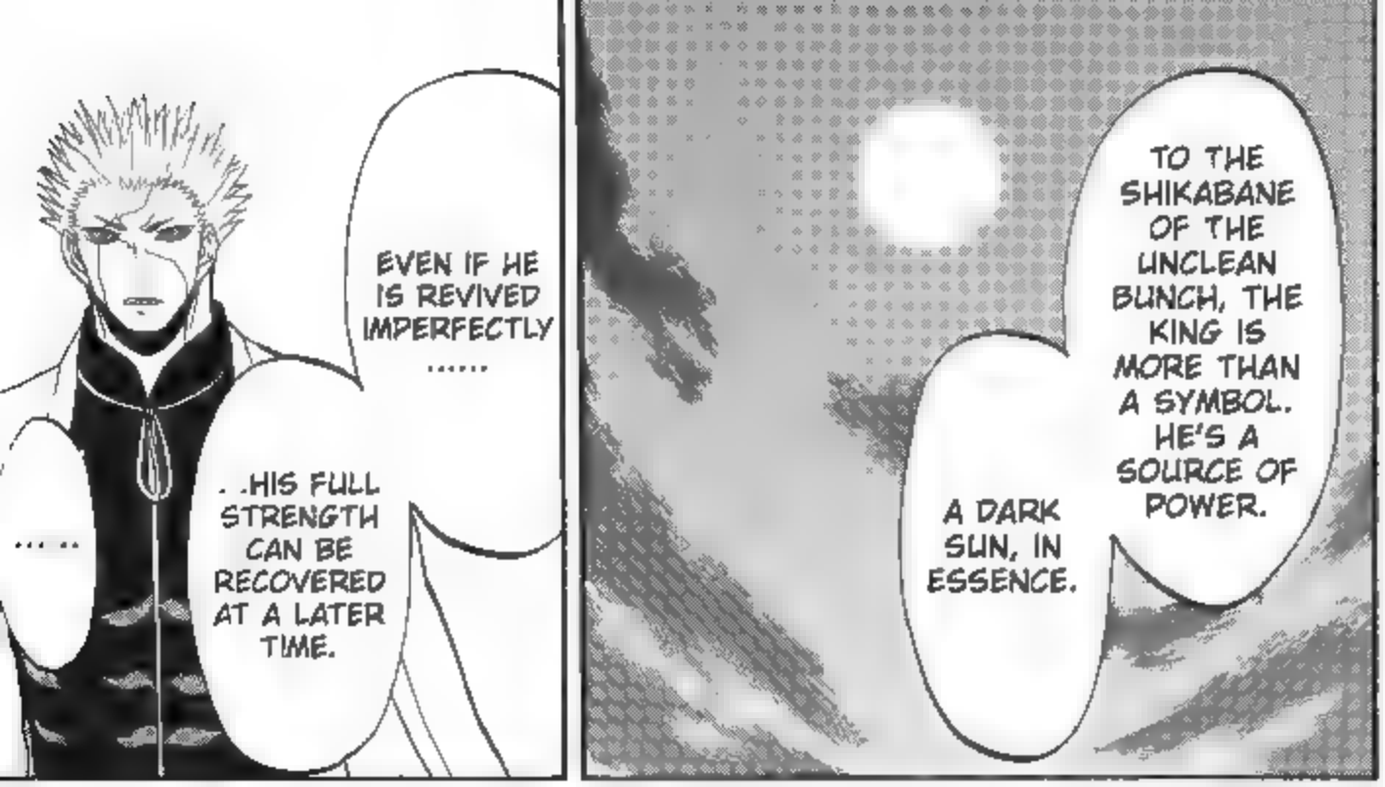
I'VE ALREADY RECEIVED CONFIRMATION FROM ALL THE FOUNDERS AND CASKET-BEARERS.
THERE IS..... NOTHING SUDDEN ABOUT IT.
WHOA... THE FOUND-ERS .....
YOU MEAN THE CASKET-BEARERS WITH ESPECIALLY STRONG CURSES .....?
THE TOP DOGS OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH?
THAT'S RIGHT.
WHAT THEY DESIRE WILL COME TO PASS.
SHUDDER
TONIGHT ...
...WE WILL REVIVE THE KING !!

AKA-SHA.
STEP
THIS IS TRULY..... PURGATORY ON EARTH.
ALL THESE WRAITHS MUST HAVE SENSED THE RITUAL ATMOSPHERE AND GATHERED
WHOAAA INCREDI-BLE..

CAN YOU REALLY GET THIS RITUAL DONE TONIGHT?
GLARE
YES.
JUST LIKE YOU ASKED.
THEY'RE ALL HERE. THE FOUNDERS AND THE CASKETS.


...THAT EVEN THE SLIGHTEST INTER-RUPTION BY THEM WOULD CAUSE IT TO FAIL.
THIS RITUAL REQUIRES INTENSE FOCUS. SO MUCH SO.....
I ASSUME... THAT THE KOUGON SECT WILL EXPECT US TO REVIVE THE KING WHEN THE STARS ARE MOST EFFECTIVELY ALIGNED.

HOWEVER... THAT'S WHAT THE FOUNDERS AND CASKET-BEARERS ARE FOR.
YES, THE ODDS OF SUCCESS WILL BE SOMEWHAT LOWER.
BUT ISN'T THERE A CHANCE YOU'LL FAIL, DOING IT NOW .....?
BUT RIGHT NOW, THEY'RE STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGE.
THAT'S WHY THIS IS OUR BEST CHANCE TO REVIVE THE KING.


TO THE SHIKABANE OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH, THE KING IS MORE THAN A SYMBOL. HE'S A SOURCE OF POWER.
A DARK SUN, IN ESSENCE.
EVEN IF HE IS REVIVED IMPERFECTLY .....
..HIS FULL STRENGTH CAN BE RECOVERED AT A LATER TIME.
... ..

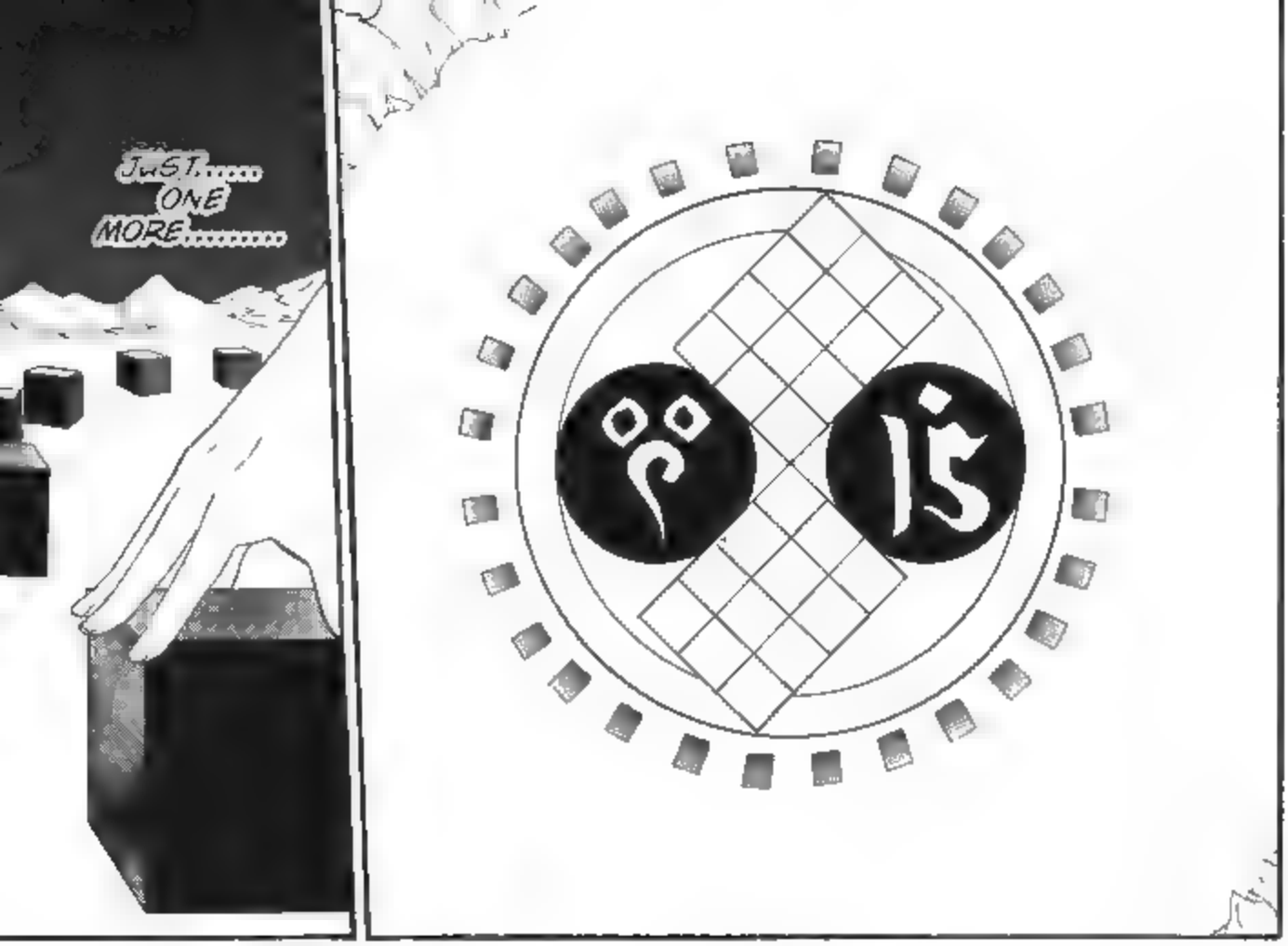
BRINGING THE KING INTO THIS WORLD...
...IS WHAT MATTERS MOST NOW.

IF THINGS GO SOUTH AND YOU FAIL...
STEP
BUT LISTEN, AKASHA .....
WELL... CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU THERE.
HMPH .....

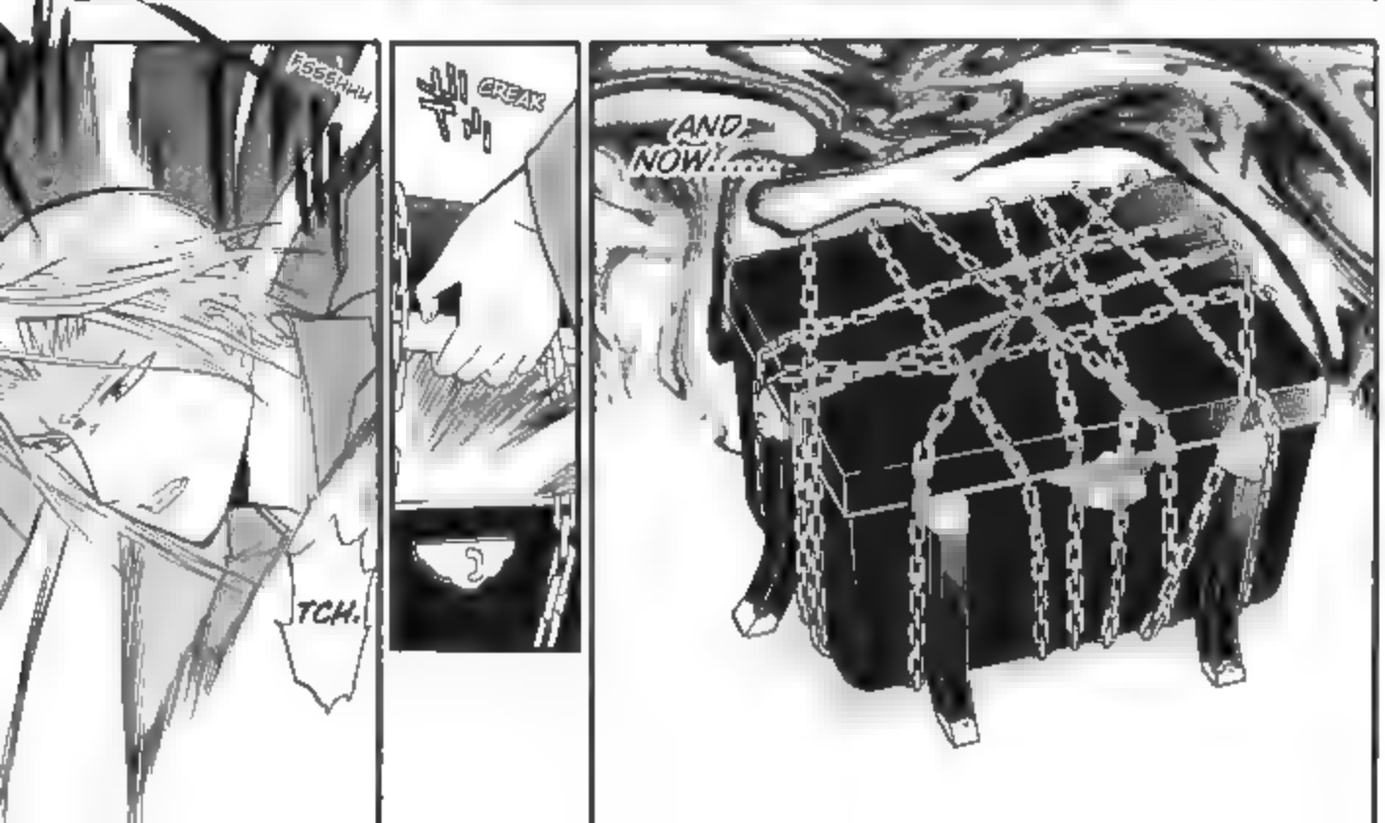
...I'LL FUCKING RIP YOU TO PIECES.
GOT IT?
CHOMP

YES.
THAT'S FINE.

TURN
LET'S GO!
HMPH.
KAKAKA


JUST..... ONE MORE.....

EACH CONTAINS THE FINAL BLOOD OF 108 PEOPLE. THEIR CURSE-ENHANCERS WILL SERVE AS THE RITUAL'S CATALYSTS.
THAT MAKES ALL TWENTY-EIGHT CASKETS .....


FSSSHHH
TCH.
CREAK
AND NOW.....

THE SUTRAS !?!?
四部大乗
五部大乗
五部大乗
五部大乗
五部大乗

DAMN..... IF I DON'T STAY FOCUSED, I'LL LOSE MYSELF TO THEM.
HOW COULD ONE BEING BIRTH SUCH POWERFUL RESENTMENT .....?

FSSSSHHH
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I LAY EYES ON THEM, I ALWAYS GET THE CHILLS .....
THE KING HIMSELF IMBUED THESE WITH HIS DESIRES AS HE WROTE THEM, AND HE SULLIED THEM WITH HIS DESPAIR AS HE CURSED THEM. THE FIVE GREAT MAHAYANA SUTRAS.

THE OTHER FOUNDERS.
THEY'RE HERE.

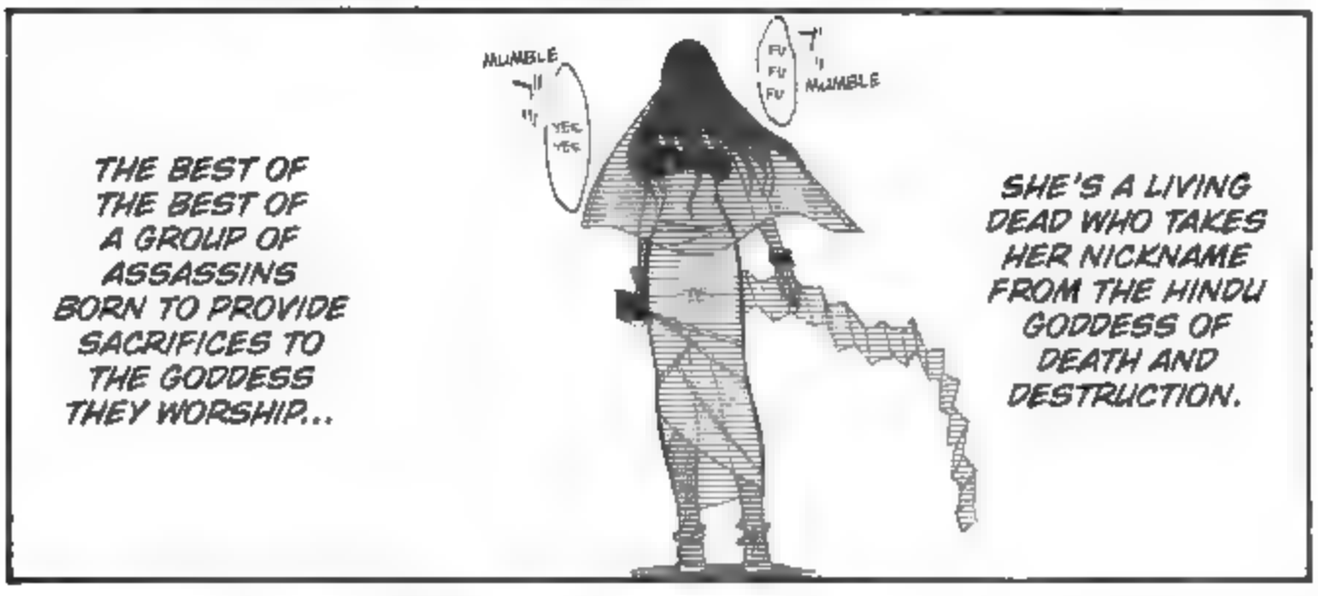
NAE
GIMME THAT, AKASHA.
STOP SPACING OUT.

THE TOP FIVE MEMBERS OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH, POWERFUL ENOUGH TO STAND AGAINST THE CURSE OF THE MAHAYANA SUTRAS AND DONATE THEIR STRENGTH TO THE RITUAL.
THE FOUNDERS
APPEAR
WHAT!?
AKASHA. ROGERE.
NAMASKAR.
SO...
THIS IS THE SUTRA, THEN?
APPEAR

...IS ONE OF THE FOUNDERS ...
SO THIS .....

BUT HOW.....!? WHEN DID SHE GET BEHIND US.....AND SOMEHOW NAB THE SUTRA .....?
THAT'S NOT MERELY INCREDIBLE SPEED. IT'S TANTAMOUNT TO A VERITABLE SUPERPOWER .....

INDIA'S "KALI," MILAM PARTHO !!
NO DOUBT .....
IT'S EMANATING POWERFUL RESENT-MENT.


THE BEST OF THE BEST OF A GROUP OF ASSASSINS BORN TO PROVIDE SACRIFICES TO THE GODDESS THEY WORSHIP...
MUMBLE
YES YES
FU FU FU
MUMBLE
SHE'S A LIVING DEAD WHO TAKES HER NICKNAME FROM THE HINDU GODDESS OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION.

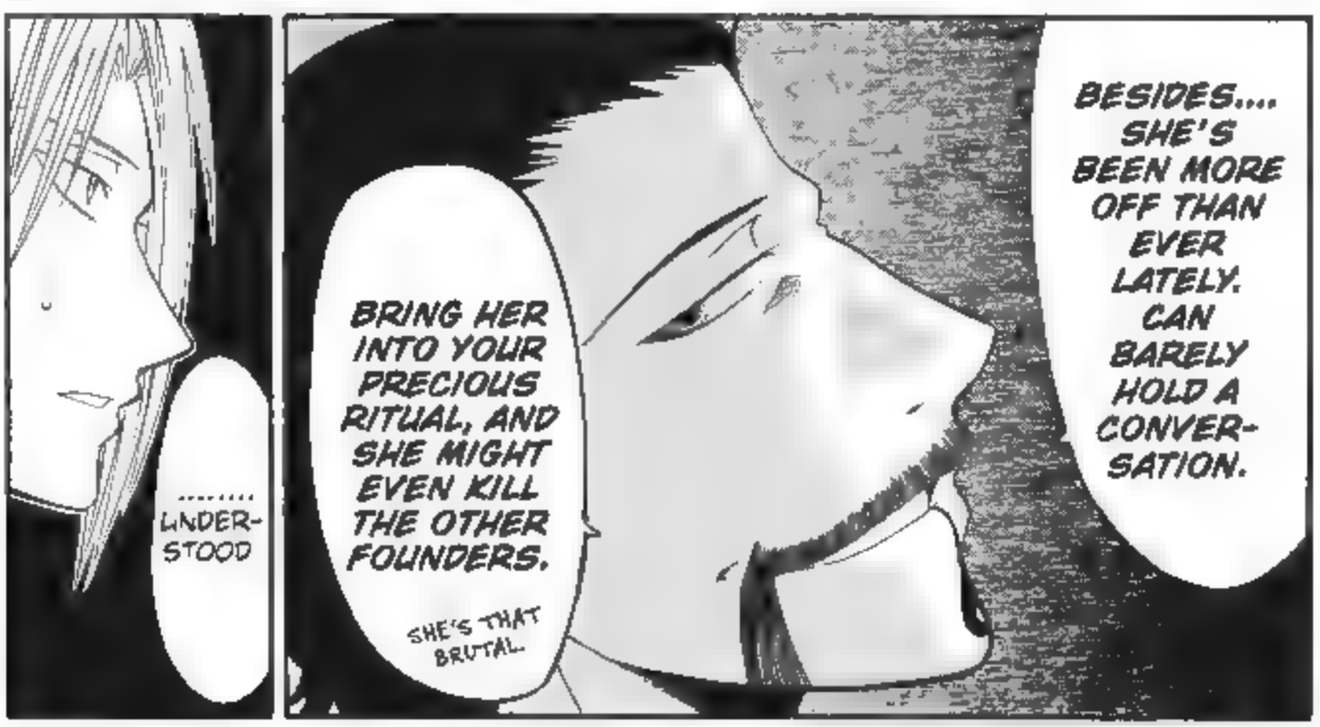
!
REALLY ?
FLIP
THE OTHERS ARE JUST TOO WEAK.

AS EXPECTED..... A CUT ABOVE ORDINARY SHIKABANE.
YES .....
WHY DO YOU SOUND SO PLEASED?

I HAD TO STAY BEHIND WHEN EVERYONE ELSE WENT TO GO STEAL THESE. I WAS SO LONELY, AKASHA.
PUFF
HMPH... THIS IS THE SUTRA?
TADA
A TRANSCENDENTAL HERMIT WHO FURTHER REFINED HER VERY BEING IN ORDER TO CONQUER DEATH.
CHINA'S JIANGSHI HERMIT— LEE LI HONG.
AHH .....
I'M SORRY.
BOTH OF THESE WOMEN ARE LEGENDS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.
HOWEVER, LI HONG ...
...ALL OF THAT IS OVER NOW.
IF I GET TO GO OUT AND PLAY NOW...
...I'LL FORGIVE YOU.
GRIN
IT'S FINE.
FSSHH

SO WHAT EXACTLY DO I DO WITH THIS THING, NOW?
トン
TAP
HMM.
AND..... FROM ONE OF EUROPE'S VARCOLACI TRIBES...
...DEVLORT AEGIS.
BECAUSE YOU'RE AN IDIOT.
CALM DOWN. YOU WOULDN'T REMEMBER EVEN IF THEY EXPLAINED IT.
SHADDUP, RIO.
I WOULD SO REMEMBER.
KU KU.
ガシャ
WRAP
.....HAZA-MA-SAN.
I THOUGHT *HOKUTO* WOULD BE REPRE-SENTING THE SEVEN STARS?
!
IT'S REALLY APPARENT HOW INCREDIBLE THIS IS NOW THAT WE'RE ALL HERE.
I DOUBT THE WORLD'S EVER SEEN SUCH A GATHERING OF UNDEAD KINGS.

KU KU ...
DON'T FRET I WON'T BUNGLE THIS.
I TOO WAS COMPELLED INTO JOINING THE UNCLEAN BUNCH BY THE KING'S POWER.
YEAH ...
SHE WAS ACTING UP AGAIN AND COULDN'T MAKE IT.
I'LL BE ACTING AS A FOUNDER IN HER PLACE. JUST FOR NOW.


..... UNDER-STOOD
BRING HER INTO YOUR PRECIOUS RITUAL, AND SHE MIGHT EVEN KILL THE OTHER FOUNDERS.
SHE'S THAT BRUTAL.
BESIDES.... SHE'S BEEN MORE OFF THAN EVER LATELY. CAN BARELY HOLD A CONVER-SATION.

STAND

THE GOD-KILLER'S READY TO GO.
AKA-SHA.

RIGHT..... THERE'S NO GOING BACK NOW.
ONCE THIS RITUAL IS COMPLETE, THE WORLD WILL CHANGE AS I'VE WISHED IT TO.

BREATHE

LET THE RITUAL COMMENCE !!
GWOOM
NOW THEN.

IT WAS A NEW MOON THE NIGHT BIG BRO DIED.
THE DAY I KNEW MY LIFE WOULD CHANGE FOREVER.....

EH?

KAGAM.
101

DEATH 21:
KING OF THE DEAD

WHISPER

THE KING.

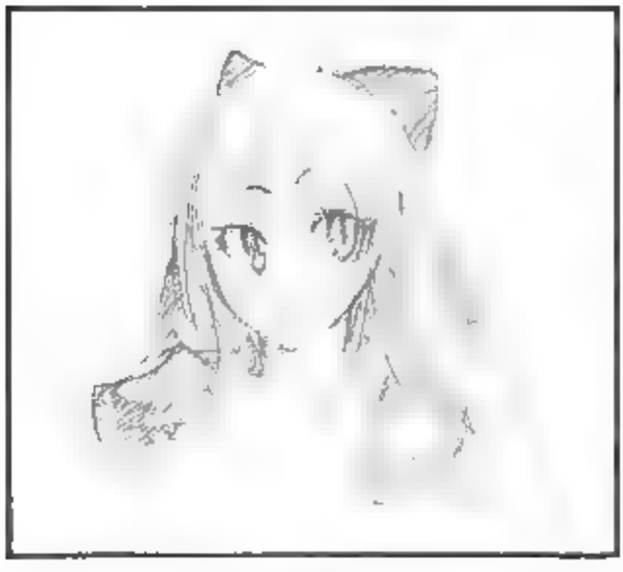
HE IS BORN.

OMINOUS DEATH OMEN.

DEATH 21: KING OF THE DEAD

...I LEARNED THAT THE WORLD WAS BROKEN.

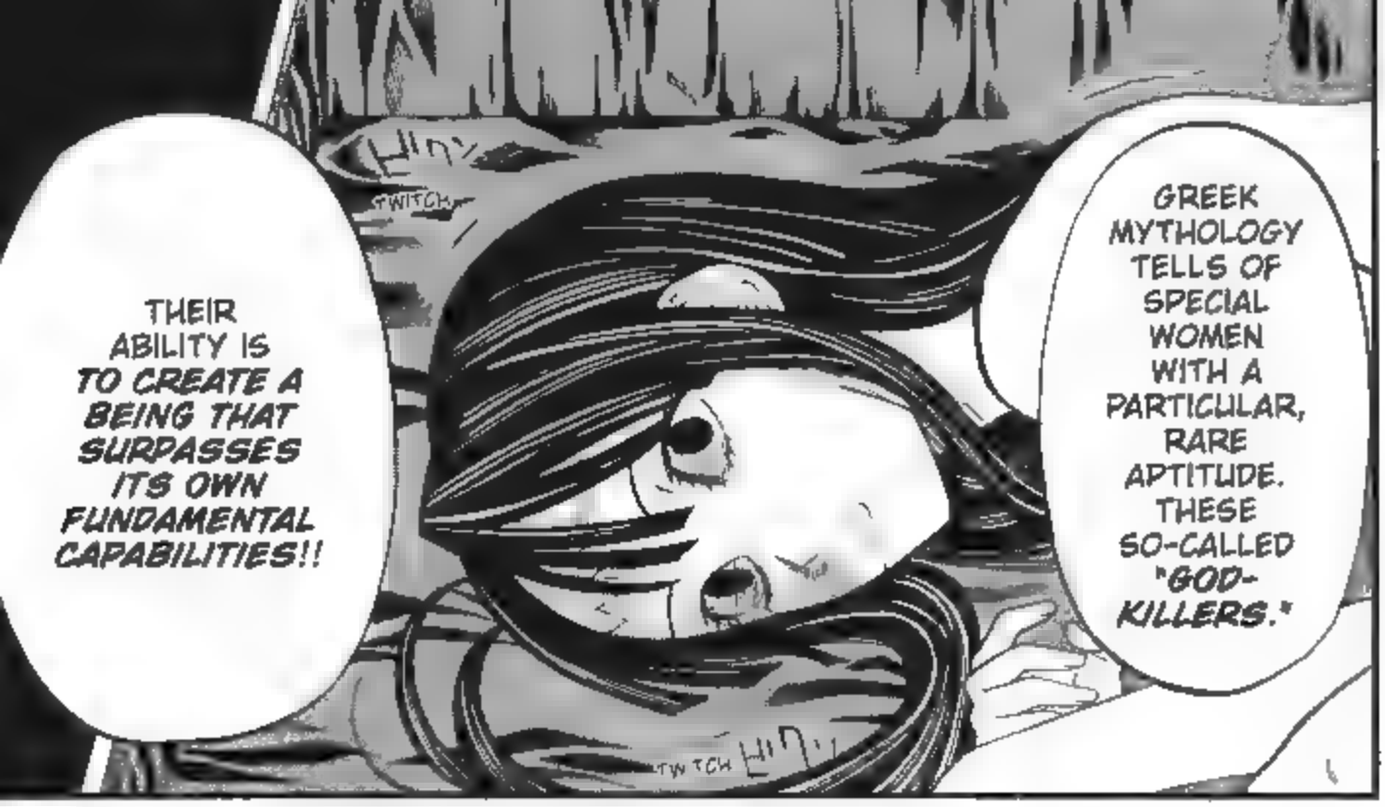
AS USUAL!!! SKETCH-FROM-MEMORY CHAMPIONSHIP!! (ITSUKI EDITION)

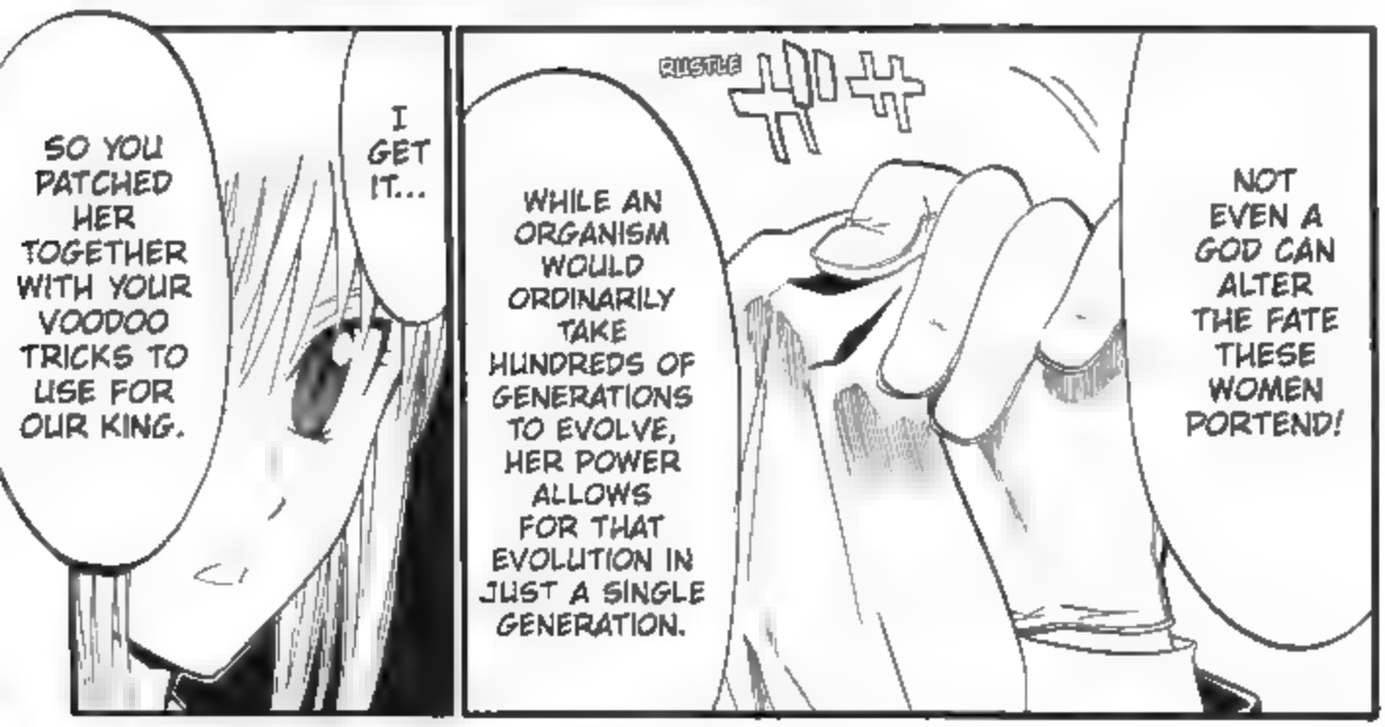


THANKS EVERYONE!!

LET THE RITUAL COMMENCE.
NOW THEN.

CLICK
ROGERE-SAN. PLEASE PLACE THE GOD-KILLER IN POSITION.
VERY WELL.
POP
EHH ..... ARE THOSE THE OLD BONES WE BROUGHT OVER?
INDEED
IN ORDER TO USE HER, I GRAFTED ON CAREFULLY-SELECTED PARTS FROM ABOUT TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE.
A FINE BIT OF CARVING...


GREEK MYTHOLOGY TELLS OF SPECIAL WOMEN WITH A PARTICULAR, RARE APTITUDE. THESE SO-CALLED "GOD-KILLERS."
THEIR ABILITY IS TO CREATE A BEING THAT SURPASSES ITS OWN FUNDAMENTAL CAPABILITIES!!
TWITCH
TWITCH


NOT EVEN A GOD CAN ALTER THE FATE THESE WOMEN PORTEND!
RUSTLE
WHILE AN ORGANISM WOULD ORDINARILY TAKE HUNDREDS OF GENERATIONS TO EVOLVE, HER POWER ALLOWS FOR THAT EVOLUTION IN JUST A SINGLE GENERATION.
I GET IT...
SO YOU PATCHED HER TOGETHER WITH YOUR VOODOO TRICKS TO USE FOR OUR KING.

YUP.
THAT'S WHY THE UNCLEAN BUNCH AND THIS GOD-KILLER EXIST.
ALL OF IT ...
...IS SO WE CAN GREET OUR SOVEREIGN IN HIS ULTIMATE FORM .....!

VERY GOOD!
NOW THEN ...
SWISH
UNFURL
FLAP
FWOOM
OM

OH, GREAT FEARED ONE.
FULFILL OUR WISHES.
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH
FWOOSH

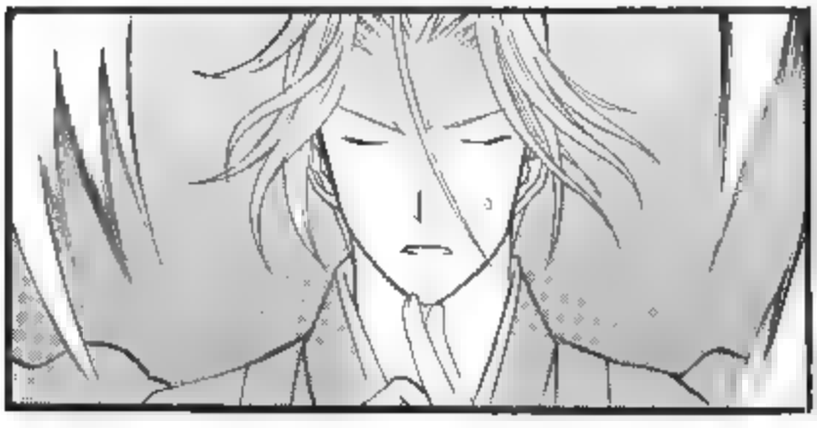
YE OF CRUELTY.
YE OF CALAMITY.
YE OF THE VOID.
BURST
BURST
BURST

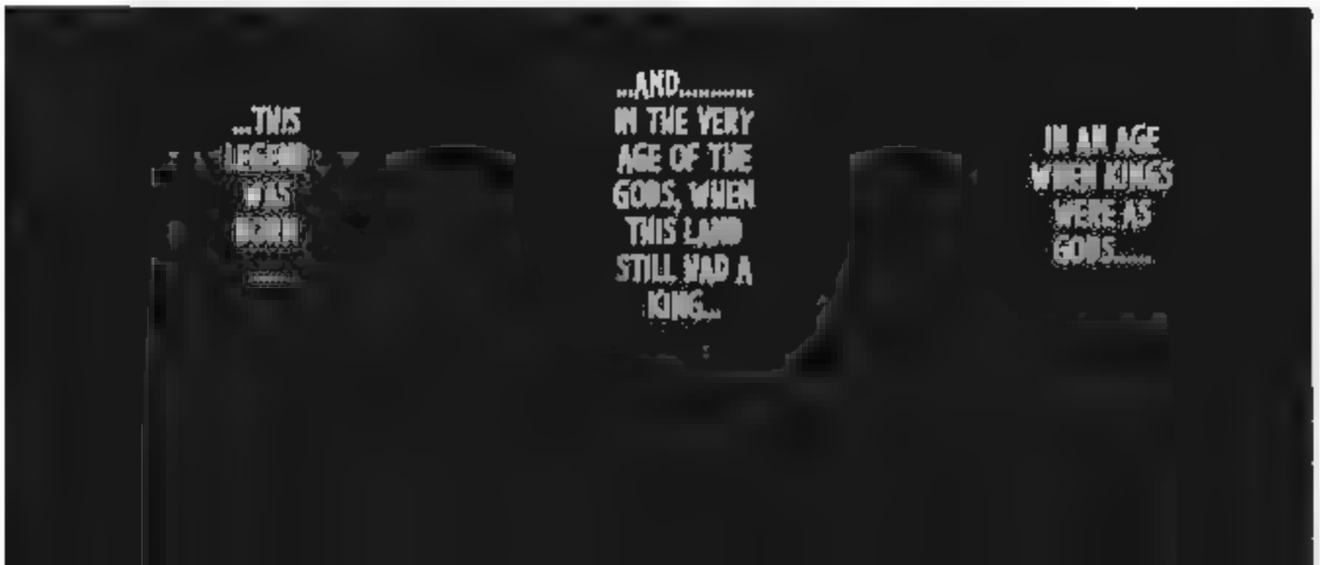
FWIP
...WE CALL UPON YOU, OUR LORD AND MASTER.
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
TO DESTROY OUR SWORN ENEMIES...

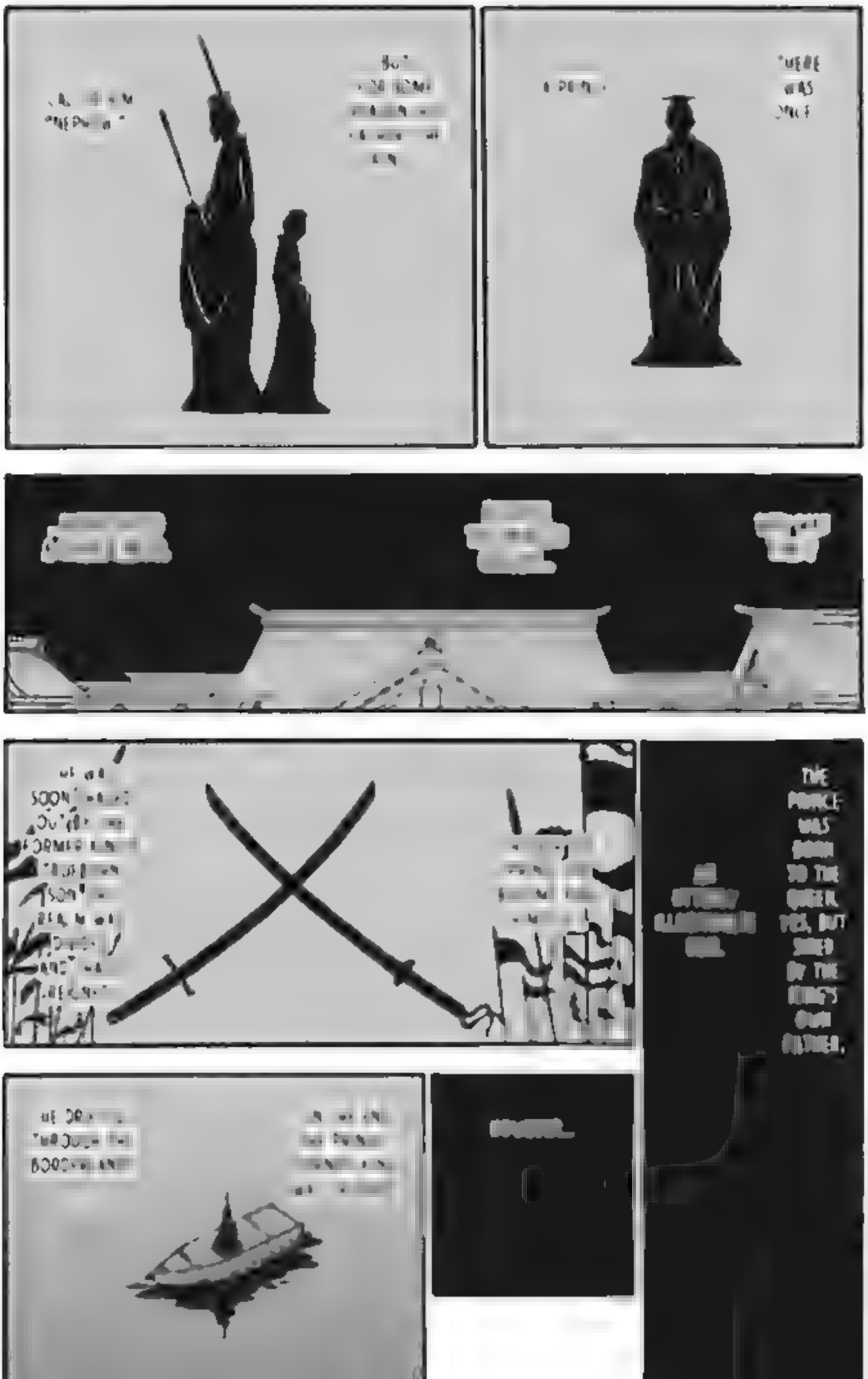
SLASH
WE OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH...
...WITH OUR KING'S CURSE IN HAND...
DRIP
...END ALL OUR TROUBLES.
DRIP
DRIP
NONE SHALL DETHRONE THE KING...
GUSH
...AND THE KING SHANT SLAY HIS FLOCK.
SLICE

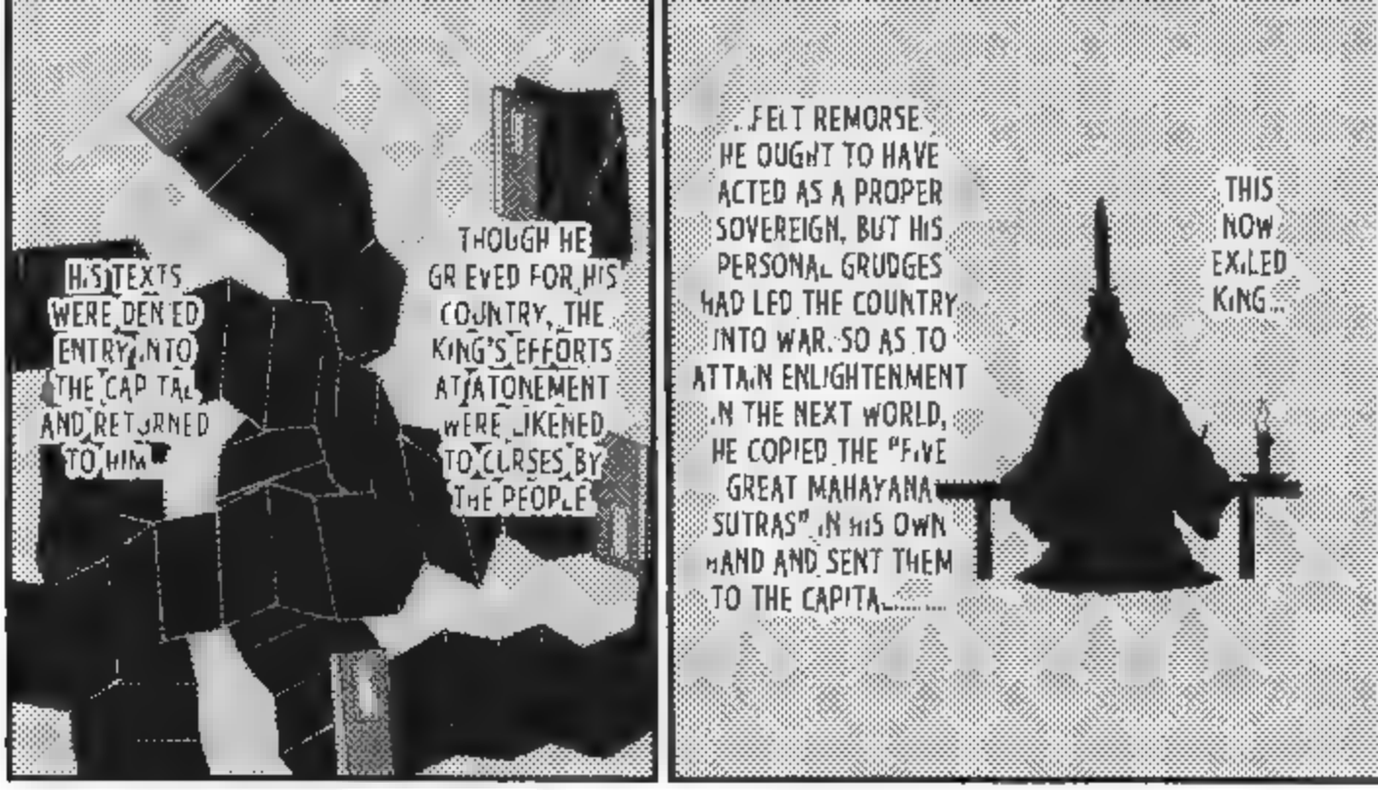
FLOW
DRIP
DRIP
!!
BOOM
SHAKE
SHAKE
SHAKE
!
FLAIL

PULSE
PULSE
PULSE
PULSE
BULGE
BULGE
BULGE



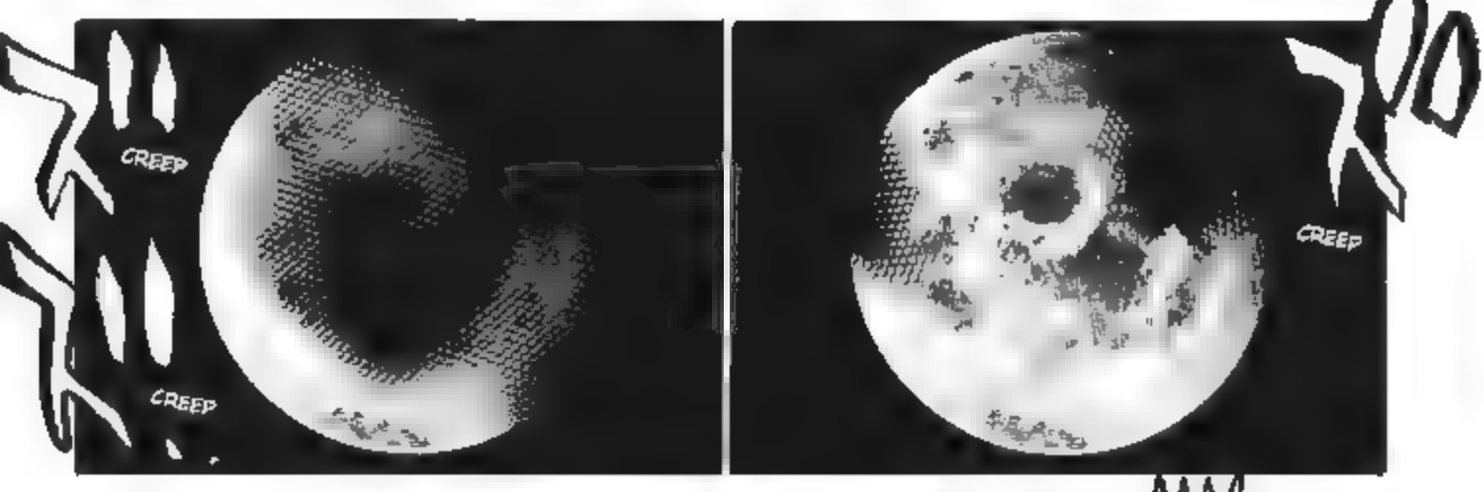

...THIS LEGEND IS
...AND..... IN THE VERY AGE OF THE GODS, WHEN THIS LAND STILL HAD A KING...
IN AN AGE WHEN KINGS WERE AS GODS.....




HIS TEXTS WERE DENIED ENTRY INTO THE CAPITAL AND RETURNED TO HIM
THOUGH HE GRIEVED FOR HIS COUNTRY, THE KING'S EFFORTS AT ATONEMENT WERE LIKENED TO CURSES BY THE PEOPLE
...FELT REMORSE. HE OUGHT TO HAVE ACTED AS A PROPER SOVEREIGN, BUT HIS PERSONAL GRUDGES HAD LED THE COUNTRY INTO WAR. SO AS TO ATTAIN ENLIGHTENMENT IN THE NEXT WORLD, HE COPIED THE "FIVE GREAT MAHAYANA SUTRAS" IN HIS OWN HAND AND SENT THEM TO THE CAPITAL.....
THIS NOW EXILED KING...

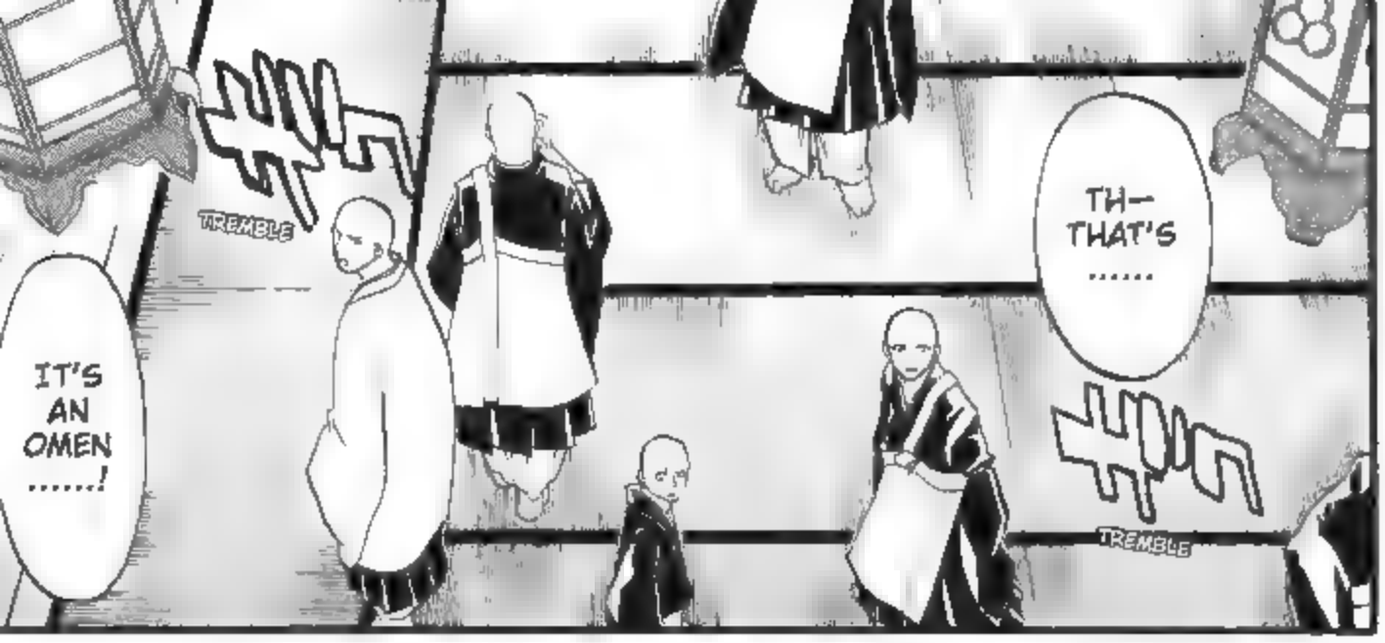
THE RETURNED SUTRAS IN HAND, HE CHANNELED ALL HIS MALICE INTO HIS OWN BLOOD, WITH WHICH HE CURSED THE DOCUMENTS
HE DESPAIRED OVER HIS FURY, HIS REGRETS, HIS GRUDGES, HIS CONVICTIONS, HIS GRIEF, AND HIS RESENTMENT
THE KING WAS FILLED WITH RAGE. FOR HIS DESTINY, HIS KARMA, AND HIS HERITAGE

HE LET HIMSELF AND HIS SUTRAS FALL TO HERESY
RIP
IN ORDER TO BECOME A DEMON KING HIMSELF


CREEP
CREEP
CREEP

OHH
.....
...
RIP
THE MOON. IT'S ...
DISAP-PEARING
THUD
TEAR
BURST

THE MOON .....!
.....
FOOM
SOUJOU-SAMA .....!
...SO HEAVY.
THIS PRESSURE... IT'S AS IF MY CHEST IS BEING CRUSHED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA .....!
DING
HAAAA
BUT THIS IS.....
IT CAN'T BE!
IT'S TOO SOON .....

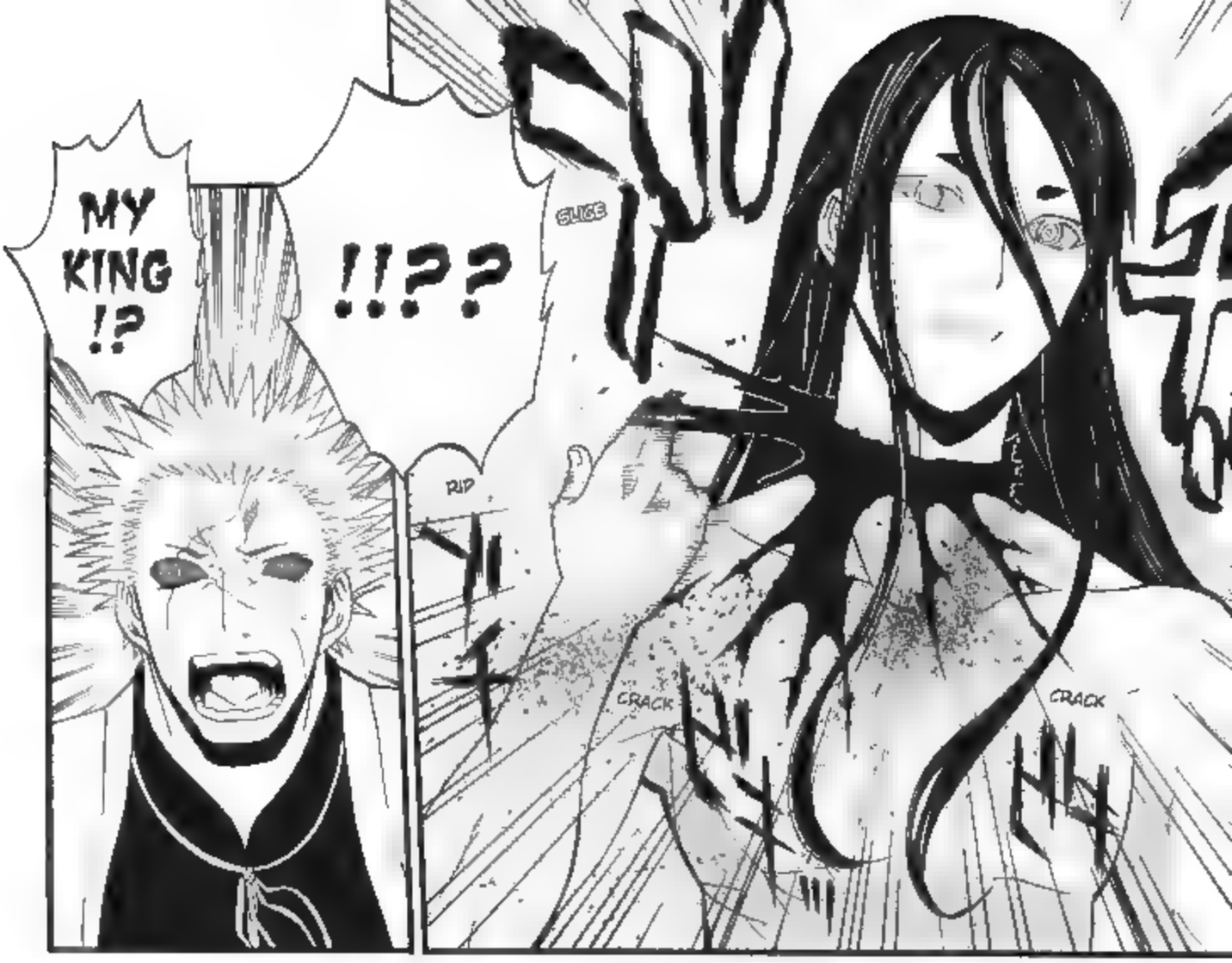

TREMBLE
IT'S AN OMEN .....!
TH— THAT'S .....
TREMBLE

..... HMPH.
DING
SO SOON.

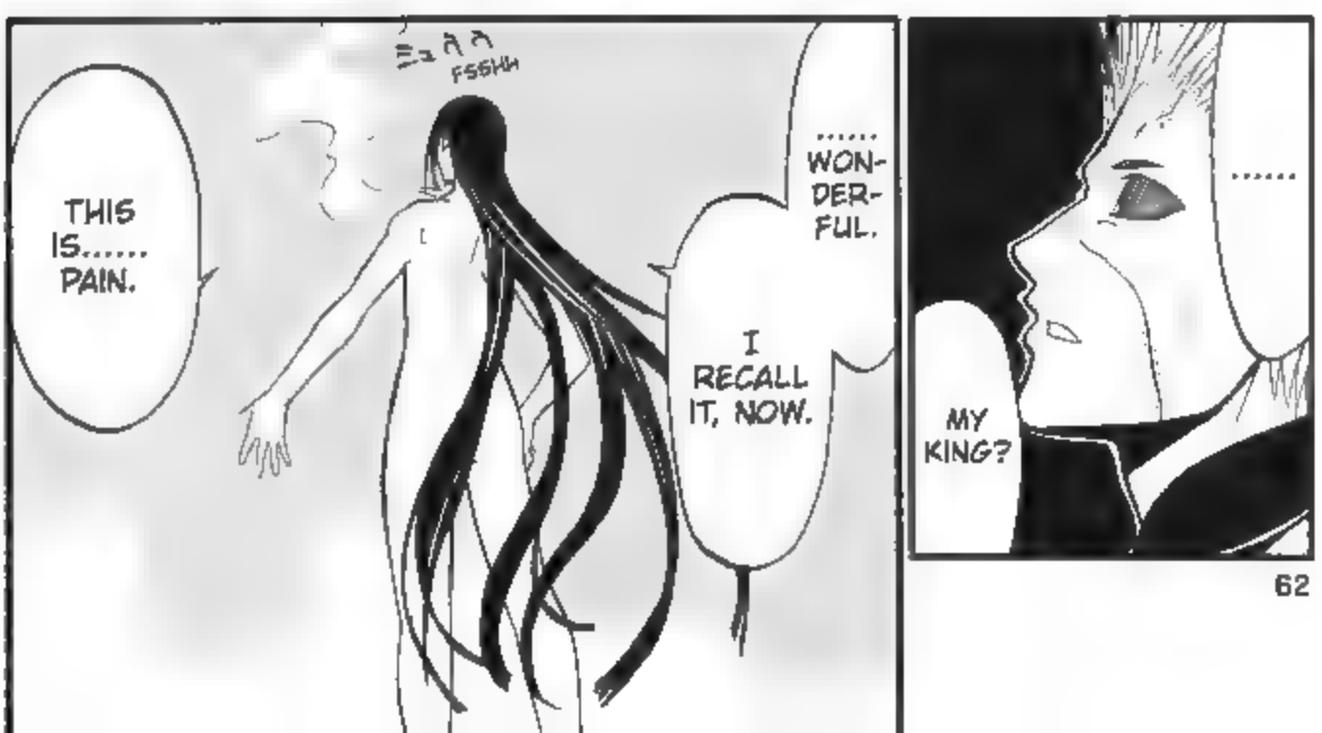
DO NOT FRET
I'M WELL AWARE.
D— DAI-SOU-JOU-SAMA .....!
DING

DO YOU MISS THIS WORLD THAT MUCH...
...YOU WRETCHED DEMON?
YOUR ROAR OF REGRET ECHOES THROUGHOUT THIS LAND OF DIVINE PROTECTION.
BAM

ドス
DOOM
.....
MY KING .....
FWIP


MY KING !?
!!??
SLICE
RIP
CRACK
CRACK

I FORGIVE .....
GOOD .....
SPURT
HISS
FU...
FSSSHHH


THIS IS..... PAIN.
FSSHH
..... WON-DER-FUL.
I RECALL IT, NOW.
.....
MY KING?

ARE YOU..... TAME-TOMO?
YES. YOUR HIGHNESS'S FIRST RETAINER, CHINZEI HACHIROU TAMETOMO.
BOW
YES. LONG HAVE I BEEN GONE, BUT NOW I MANIFEST IN THIS WORLD ONCE MORE.
FLAP
IT MOVES ME DEEPLY THAT I WOULD HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO BEAR WITNESS TO YOUR HIGHNESS'S COUNTENANCE ONCE MORE.
I HAVE LONGED FOR THIS DAY, EVER SINCE I VOWED TO CONCEAL MY IDENTITY.
FWIP
FWIP
FOR YOUR 850 YEARS OF LOYALTY ...
...I COMMEND YOU.
YOUR WORDS HONOR ME.
..... HOW-EVER.
KU KU.

IT APPEARS I'VE GAINED A NUMBER OF ECCENTRIC FOLLOWERS DURING MY TIME AWAY.
!
WHOA, HE WAS ALL NAKED. GUESS THAT'S JUST HOW KINGS ARE...(?)
YES..... UM, I AM SORRY.
THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE ESSENTIAL TO YOUR HIGHNESS'S REVIVAL .....
NOT LIKE I'M LOYAL TO HIM OR ANYTHING, THOUGH.
WHY WOULD I BE?
HEH.

IT MATTERS NOT.
I CARE NOT ABOUT THE PARTICULARS SO LONG AS THEY ARE STRONG.
EVEN IF SOME ARE HERE NOT OUT OF LOYALTY.

LEER
ニヤ
!
ピク
TWITCH

I FORGIVE ALL.
TRAITORS AND ENEMIES ALIKE.
THE REGRET AND LONE-LINESS I FELT AS A HUMAN ...
...AND EVEN MY FATE..... I FORGIVE ALL.

BUT I WILL KILL.
EVERY HUMAN WILL DIE. .....ONCE THEY ARE FORGIVEN.
EVERY LAW. EVERY BOUND-ARY.
I FORGIVE ALL, AND I WILL KILL ALL.
RUMBLE
...I NO LONGER NEED MY HUMAN NAME.
STEP
AS SUCH ...
...I SACRIFICED MY HUMANITY.
TO THAT END ...

WHOOSH
MA'EN SUGAMI.
THAT IS MY NAME FROM TODAY ON.
TRULY..... TERRIFYING.....
!!
DRIP
SURELY THE NAME OF ONE WHO WILL BRING CHAOS TO THIS COUNTRY ONCE MORE.....
MA'EN SUGAMI..... A "DEMONIC GOD OF CURSES" THEN.....?

IT'S ALL THE MORE CLEAR IN-PERSON..... THIS IS THE KING OF ALL SHIKABANE. .....DAMN..... TRULY TERRIFYING .....
JUST THINKING OF WHAT COMES NEXT MAKES ME WANT TO FLEE IN FEAR.....!
!!
JOLT
ぎくっ!!
OHH .....
YOU WISH TO FLEE, MONK .....?
I KNOW WHY A HUMAN IS AMONG MY CADRE OF DEATH.
A LIVING CLERGYMAN WAS ESSENTIAL TO MY REVIVAL, YES?
HOW-EVER ...
AS A HUMAN, YOU FRET ABOUT GETTING WHAT IS YOURS?
AND ABOUT UNFORESEEN OUTCOMES... LIKE THIS?
!
!?

CRACKLE
!!
BZZT
!!
YOUR HIGH-NESS !!
THAT'S .....
.....
MY BODY DEGRADES WHEN I ATTEMPT TO EMERGE.
LICK
KU KU ...
THE WORLD DOES NOT WISH TO LOOSE ME FROM THIS CIRCLE.
.....
YOUR... HIGH-NESS.

PIERCE
SWISH
!!
GAH !!
SPLURT
AKA-SHA .....
YOU'VE... FAILED...
THE KING. . HIS HIGHNESS
YOU PUT HIM IN THIS NASTY STATE...
HAA
TOLD YOU
YOU'RE DEAD!!

STOP.

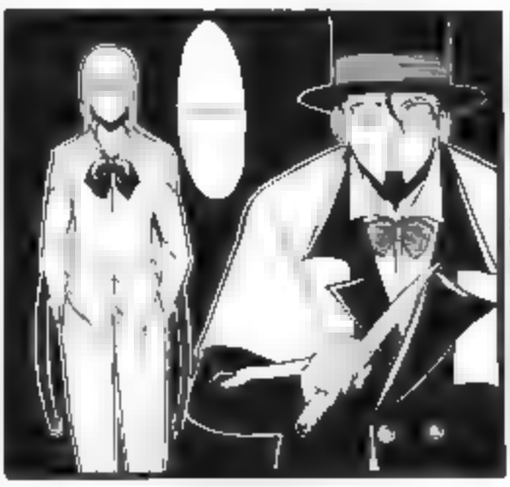
TAME-TOMO.

SPURT

!?

I FORGIVE HIM.

.....A SPECIAL ABILITY?
..... WHAT... WAS THAT?



GWAH .....
UNDER... STOOD.
UGH... YOUR HIGH-NESS.
SPLURT

MILAM-CHAN?
MUTTER
.....
MUTTER
YOU SEE HOW HE MANAGED THAT, MILAM-CHAN?
WHOA .....
HE TOOK OFF BOTH OF KEITO'S ARMS IN A FLASH. AMAZING.

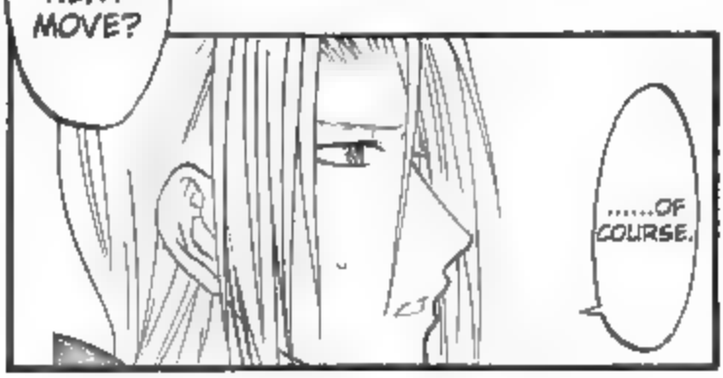
GLAD HE'S ON OUR SIDE.
HMPH.
THAT'S THE GREATEST, STRONGEST KING FOR YA

UNFORTU-NATELY, NOT EVEN MY SKIN COULD DETECT WHAT JUST HAPPENED.
MUTTER
.....
MUTTER
..... NO, LI HONG.

SMALL THOUGH MY PRISON IS NOW, YOU HAVE PLACED GREAT IMPORTANCE ON MAKING ME PERFECT, NO?
HOW-EVER ...
BURST
COFF, HACK!
CRACK
CRACK
MONK.
CRACK
YOU KNEW THAT THE STARS WERE NOT OPTIMALLY ALIGNED FOR MY REVIVAL.
SHATTER

IT IS AS YOU SAY.....
Y— YES. YES, YOUR HIGH-NESS.
COFF ...

VERY WELL. .....I FORGIVE YOU.
BUT LET ME ASK YOU.
WHAT IS YOUR NEXT MOVE?


.....OF COURSE.

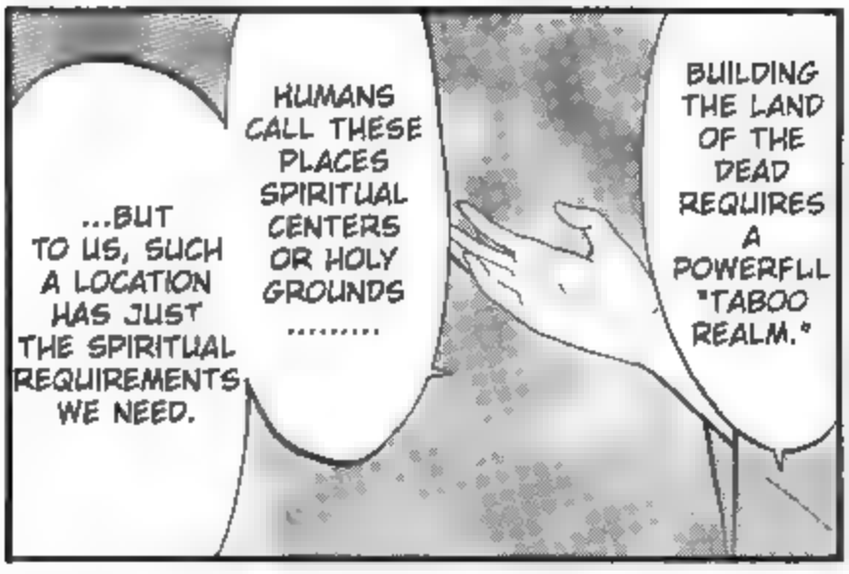
..... ULTIMATELY, I INTEND TO PERFECT BOTH YOUR HIGHNESS AND THE LAND OF THE DEAD.
I..... HAVE DEDICATED MY EFFORTS TO THAT END.

MY HUMBLEST APOLOGIES, BUT...
...AS OF NOW, YOUR HIGHNESS CANNOT LEAVE THIS SEAL.
THIS IS BECAUSE YOUR HIGHNESS'S BODY REQUIRES AN ATMOSPHERE RICH WITH REGRET AND DEATH.

THAT IS TO SAY, THE LAND OF THE DEAD!
THE LAND OF THE DEAD IS WHAT WILL COMPLETE YOU, YOUR HIGHNESS.

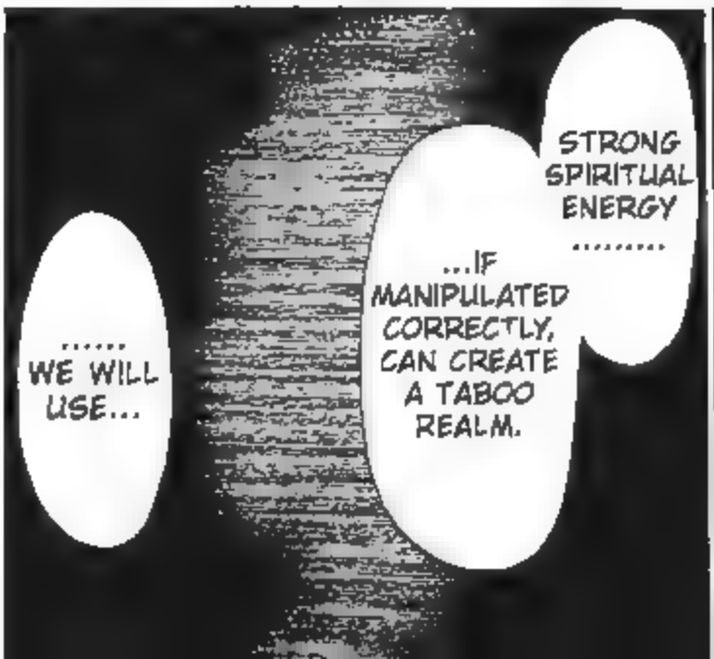
HMPH.....SO THE UNCLEAN BUNCH'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS THIS FIRST OBJECTIVE?
YES ...
THAT'S RIGHT, LI HONG.
GUH ...
BUT AKASHA. ESTABLISHING SUCH A NATION .....
FSSHH
IF YOU FORESAW ALL THIS, THEN WHY DON'T YOU GO AHEAD AND TELL US HOW YOU'RE GONNA CONSTRUCT THE LAND OF THE DEAD?

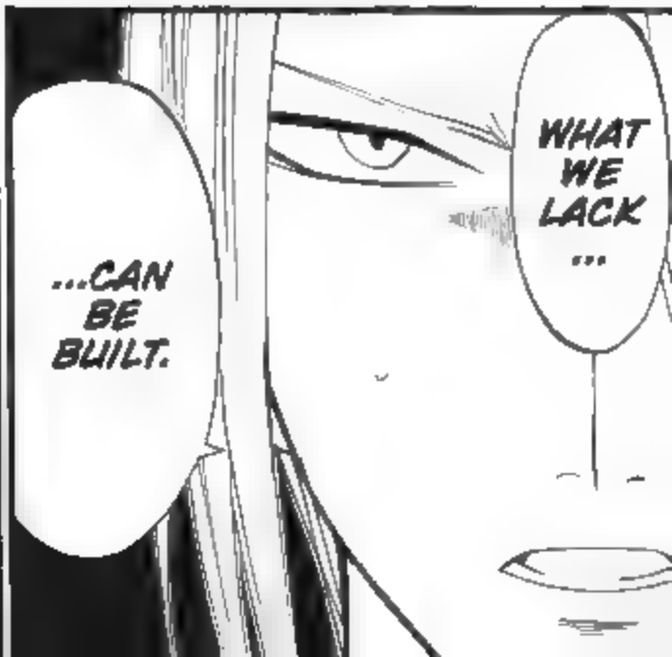
THE TIME HAS FINALLY COME...
AT LAST .....
ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN.
YES..... WELL.


...BUT TO US, SUCH A LOCATION HAS JUST THE SPIRITUAL REQUIREMENTS WE NEED.
HUMANS CALL THESE PLACES SPIRITUAL CENTERS OR HOLY GROUNDS .....
BUILDING THE LAND OF THE DEAD REQUIRES A POWERFUL "TABOO REALM."

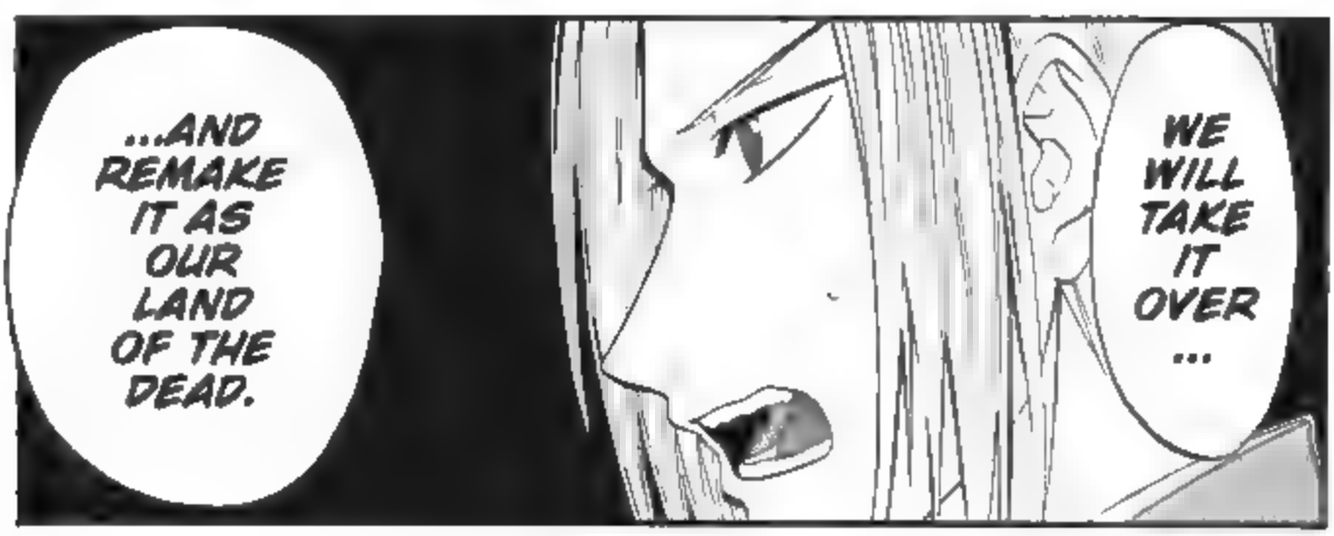
GETTING TO THIS MOMENT...
THAT'S WHAT ALL THE SACRIFICES HAVE BEEN FOR.....!

HOW-EVER!
NO... SADLY.
AND YOU'VE GOT A PLACE LIKE THAT?


..... WE WILL USE...
...IF MANIPULATED CORRECTLY, CAN CREATE A TABOO REALM.
STRONG SPIRITUAL ENERGY .....


...CAN BE BUILT.
WHAT WE LACK ...

THE SITE OF THE KOUGON SECT'S HEAD TEMPLE ...
...YAMA CITY, IN AICHI PREFECTURE.

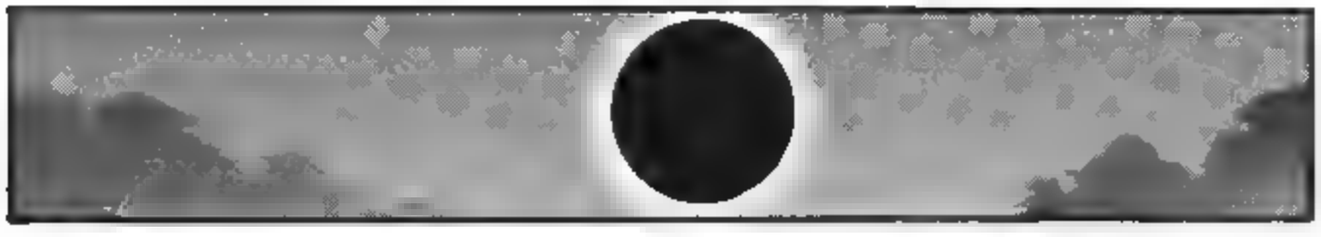

...AND REMAKE IT AS OUR LAND OF THE DEAD.
WE WILL TAKE IT OVER ...

EXCEL-
LENT.
I
ADMIRE
SUCH
VILENESS.
YOU
WOULD
SELL OUT
YOUR OWN
KIND FOR
PERSONAL
GAIN?

FWOO..

OHH.

LET US
KILL. LET
US TAKE
THIS
WORLD.
JUST
AS YOU
WISH...
I
FORGIVE
YOU.



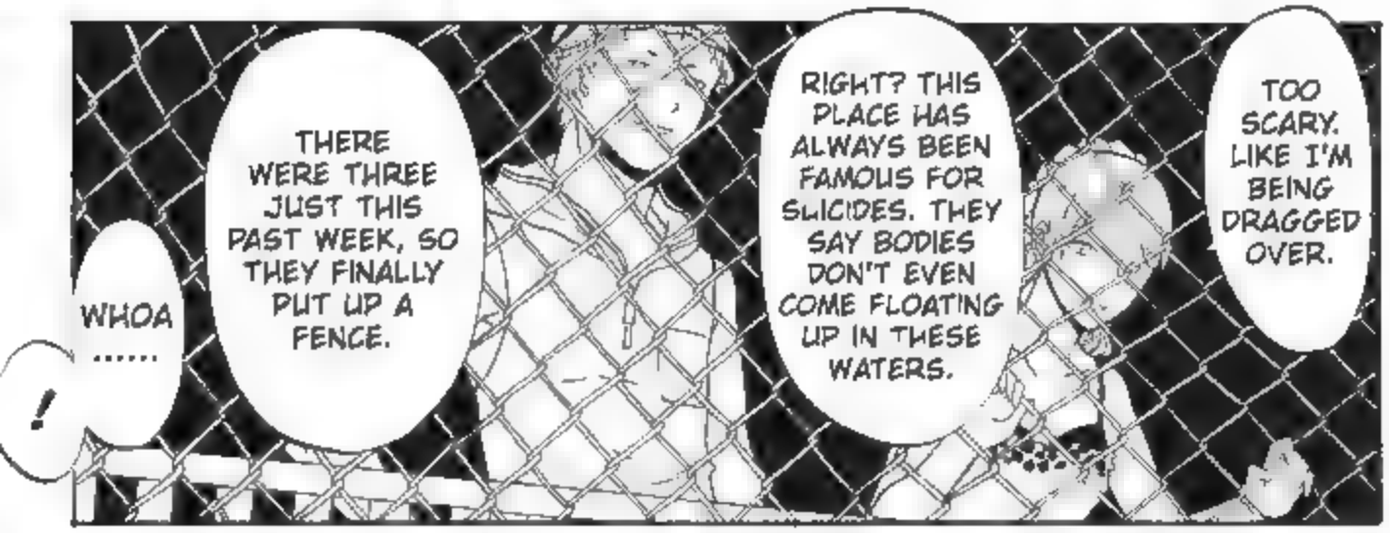
Y-
ARE YOU AN ILLUSION... THAT ONLY I CAN SEE?
A TALKING CAT WITH A HUMAN MOUTH .....
..... YOU ...
WHAT..... ARE YOU?

YOU TOO.
THE WORLD AND..... YOURSELF .....
YOU WILL COME TO KNOW .....
TO REMEM-BER.

.....
.....
!?
GRAB
ガシ
TMD
!!
LUNGE
WAIT .....

I FEEL IT.....
LIKE THE WORLD JUST SHUDDERED
.....
I FEEL IT IN THE WIND.....
AN OMEN..... THAT SLOWLY .....
...THE WORLD IS BEING CORRUPTED .....
AND I'M GUESSING .....
...THAT'S BECAUSE THE KING'S BEEN REVIVED .....
.....
THAT MOON.
I DON'T LIKE IT.

DEATH:22: FOR ALL OF CREATION


TOO SCARY. LIKE I'M BEING DRAGGED OVER.
RIGHT? THIS PLACE HAS ALWAYS BEEN FAMOUS FOR SUICIDES. THEY SAY BODIES DON'T EVEN COME FLOATING UP IN THESE WATERS.
THERE WERE THREE JUST THIS PAST WEEK, SO THEY FINALLY PUT UP A FENCE.
WHOA .....
!

H-HEY, COME ON. QUIT JOKING AROUND.
CREEP

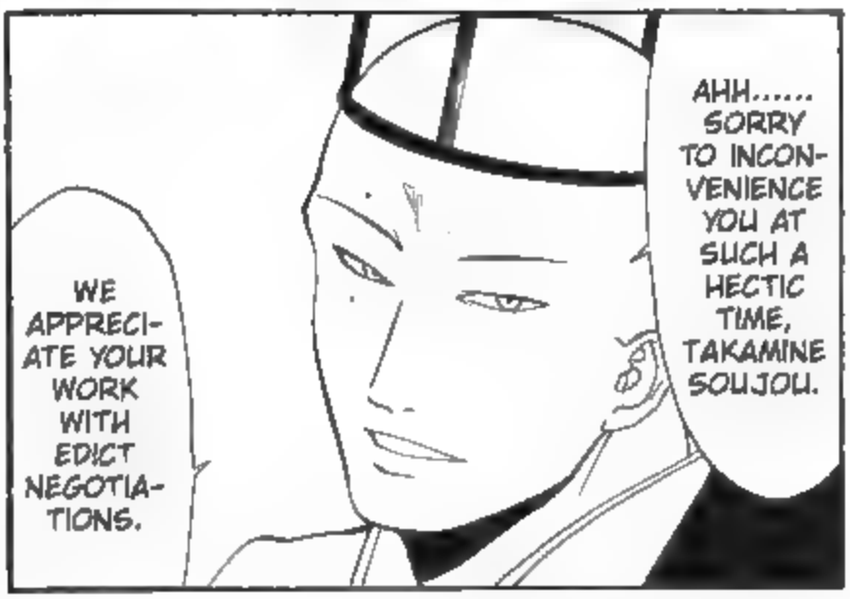
H-HEY ...
.....

Y-YEAH .....
YOU WANNA..... GET OUT OF HERE?
BLUB
BLUB
SPLASH
SPLASH

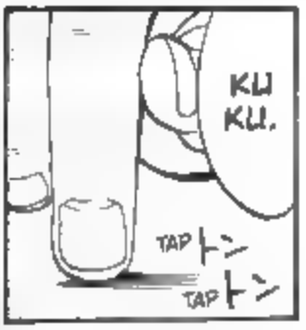
DEATH 22: FOR ALL OF CREATION

THANK YOU FOR COMING, TAKAMINE SOUJOU.
DAI-SOUJOU-SAMA AND THE OTHER SOUJOU HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED.
TMP とた
TMP とた
AH.
BUT..... UMEHARA SOUJOU IS NOT IN ATTENDANCE, NOR COULD WE REACH HIM.....
..... TCH.
THAT FOOL..... SLACKING OFF SOME-WHERE .....!
FWUMP

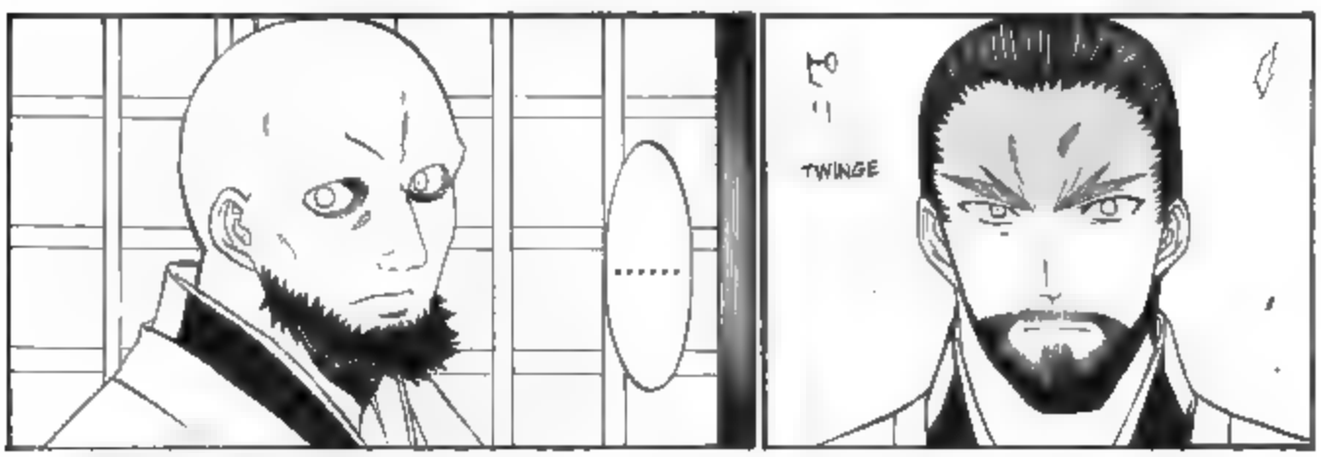
NO.....I APOLOGIZE FOR MY TARDINESS, SHIOU GONDAI-SOUJOU.
I WAS BUSY DEALING WITH THE LATEST INTELLIGENCE REPORTS.


AHH..... SORRY TO INCON-VENIENCE YOU AT SUCH A HECTIC TIME, TAKAMINE SOUJOU.
WE APPRECI-ATE YOUR WORK WITH EDICT NEGOTIA-TIONS.

TAKAMINE..... SEEMS LIKE YOU DON'T GET HOW IMPORTANT THIS MEETING REALLY IS.
EXCUSES .....


KU KU.
TAP トン
TAP トン

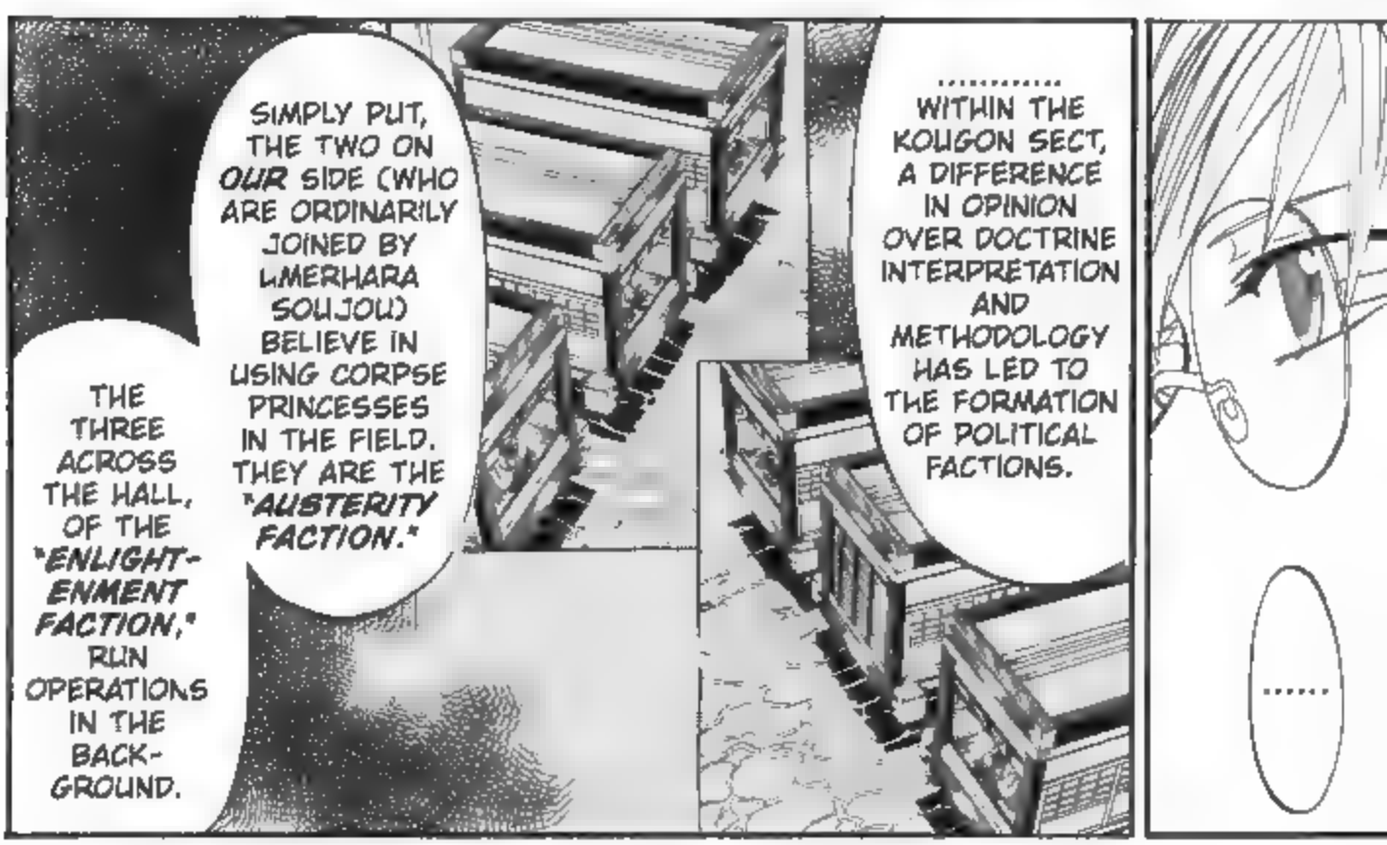
UMEHARA IS ABSENT. NOW YOU SHOW UP LATE.....
..... WELL. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU MUST STILL BE IN SHOCK.
OVER HAVING YOUR BELOVED DISCIPLE ...
...KILLED OFF SO EASILY BY THE TRAITOR AND A SINGLE SHIKABANE.


.....
TWINGE

TODAY'S MEETING IS ON A MATTER THAT CONCERNS OUR ENTIRE ORGANIZATION.
THE MASSIVE SHIKABANE SWARM, THE UNCLEAN BUNCH, AND THEIR "KING."
YOU OUGHT TO FORGET YOUR USUAL ENMITY FOR EACH OTHER AND UNITE AGAINST THIS THREAT. .....UNDERSTOOD?
DING
ENOUGH.

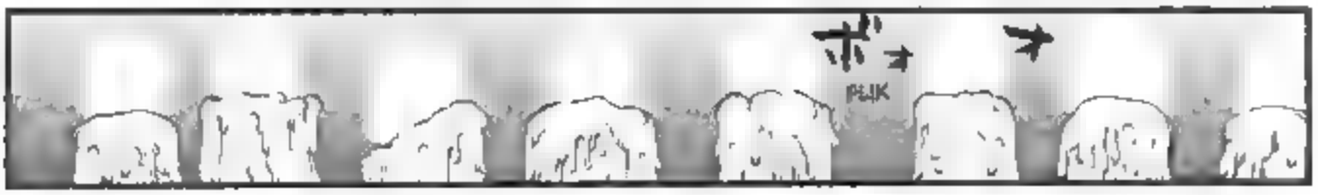
FLIK
VERY WELL. .....NOW THEN...
YES.
YES.
YES.
LET'S BEGIN THE KOUGON SECT'S HIGHEST CONFER-ENCE.
THE RITE OF DISCOURSE.

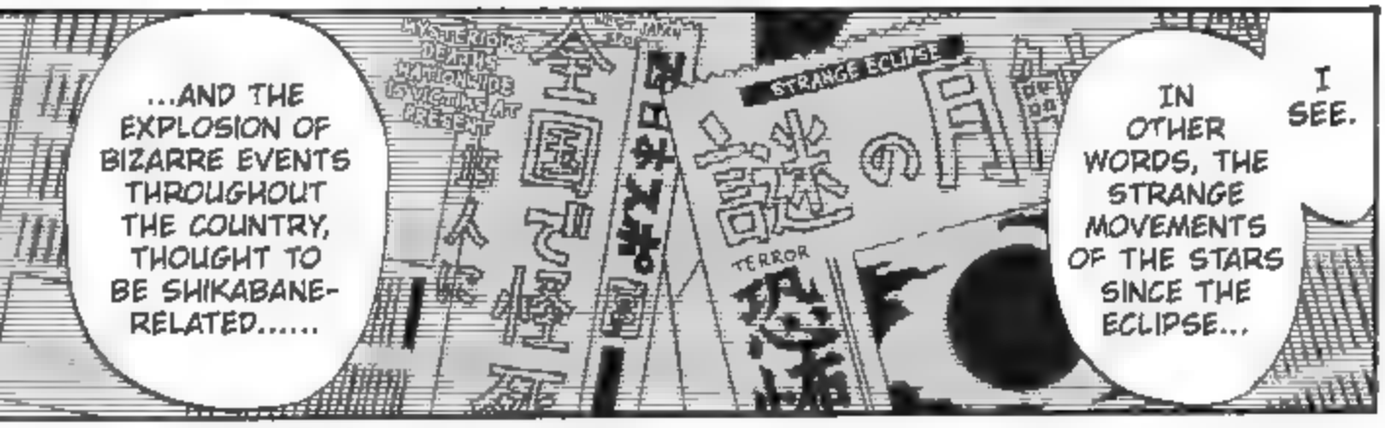
THERE'S NO HELPING IT WHEN THE LEADERS OF THE AUSTERITY AND ENLIGHTEN-MENT FACTIONS ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER .....
HUH?
YES. . THEIR CONTEMPT FOR ONE ANOTHER IS CLEAR.
THAT'S PUTTING IT BLUNTLY ...
KAMIKA-SAMA .....
THE MOOD IN HERE IS, WELL... THE SOUJOU-SAMA ALL SEEM TO BE. . .


THE THREE ACROSS THE HALL, OF THE "ENLIGHT-ENMENT FACTION," RUN OPERATIONS IN THE BACK-GROUND.
SIMPLY PUT, THE TWO ON OUR SIDE (WHO ARE ORDINARILY JOINED BY UMERHARA SOUJOU) BELIEVE IN USING CORPSE PRINCESSES IN THE FIELD. THEY ARE THE "AUSTERITY FACTION."
..... WITHIN THE KOUGON SECT, A DIFFERENCE IN OPINION OVER DOCTRINE INTERPRETATION AND METHODOLOGY HAS LED TO THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL FACTIONS.
.....

.....IS THAT SO?
THIS IS ONE DOWNSIDE TO THE EXPANSION OF THE ORGANIZATION.
EACH SIDE BELIEVES IT BETTER REPRESENTS THE FAITH AND DOCTRINE OF THE KOUGON SECT, SO NEITHER WILL BUDGE IN FAVOR OF THE OTHER.

TAKAMINE-SAMA MUST BE EXPECTING THAT.
BUT..... THEY CAN COME TOGETHER AGAINST AN EXTERNAL THREAT.
...THE ENLIGHTENMENT FACTION TENDS TO DISAGREE WITH MOST OF WHAT HE HAS TO SAY
BECAUSE TAKAMINE SOUJOU IS PART OF THE AUSTERITY FACTION ...

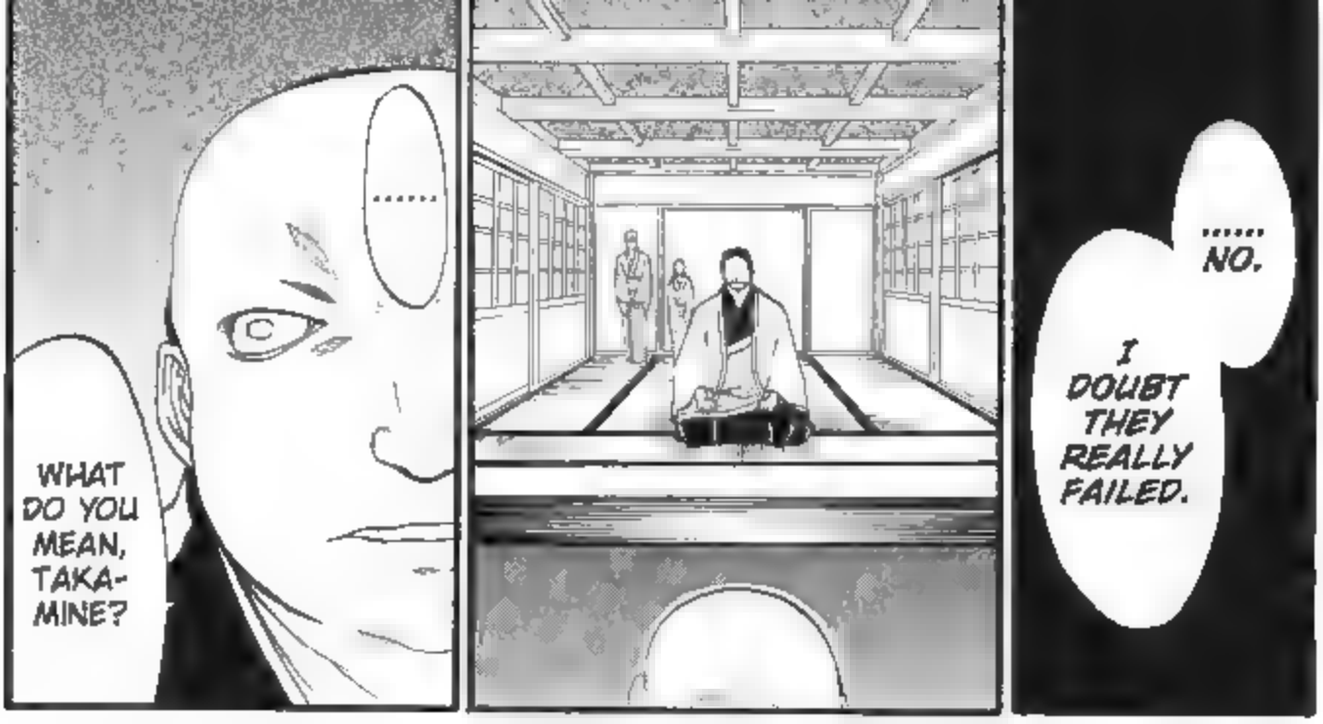

ボォ
PUK


...AND THE EXPLOSION OF BIZARRE EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, THOUGHT TO BE SHIKABANE-RELATED.....
STRANGE ECLIPSE
謎の日蝕
TERROR
恐怖
I SEE.
IN OTHER WORDS, THE STRANGE MOVEMENTS OF THE STARS SINCE THE ECLIPSE...

TO THINK HE COULD CAUSE SUCH THINGS .....
DREADFUL..... SUCH A CONDEM-NABLE FIGURE .....

...ARE NOTHING BUT AFTEREFFECTS OF THEIR KING BEING SUMMONED?

IT DOESN'T SEEM THE KING CAN DO ANYTHING MORE THAN WE'VE ALREADY SEEN.....
THEN THE UNCLEAN BUNCH FAILED TO PROPERLY REVIVE THEIR KING..... THEY FAILED.....
HOWEVER..... GONDAI-SOUJOU, IF EVERYTHING WE'VE HEARD IS TRUE.....

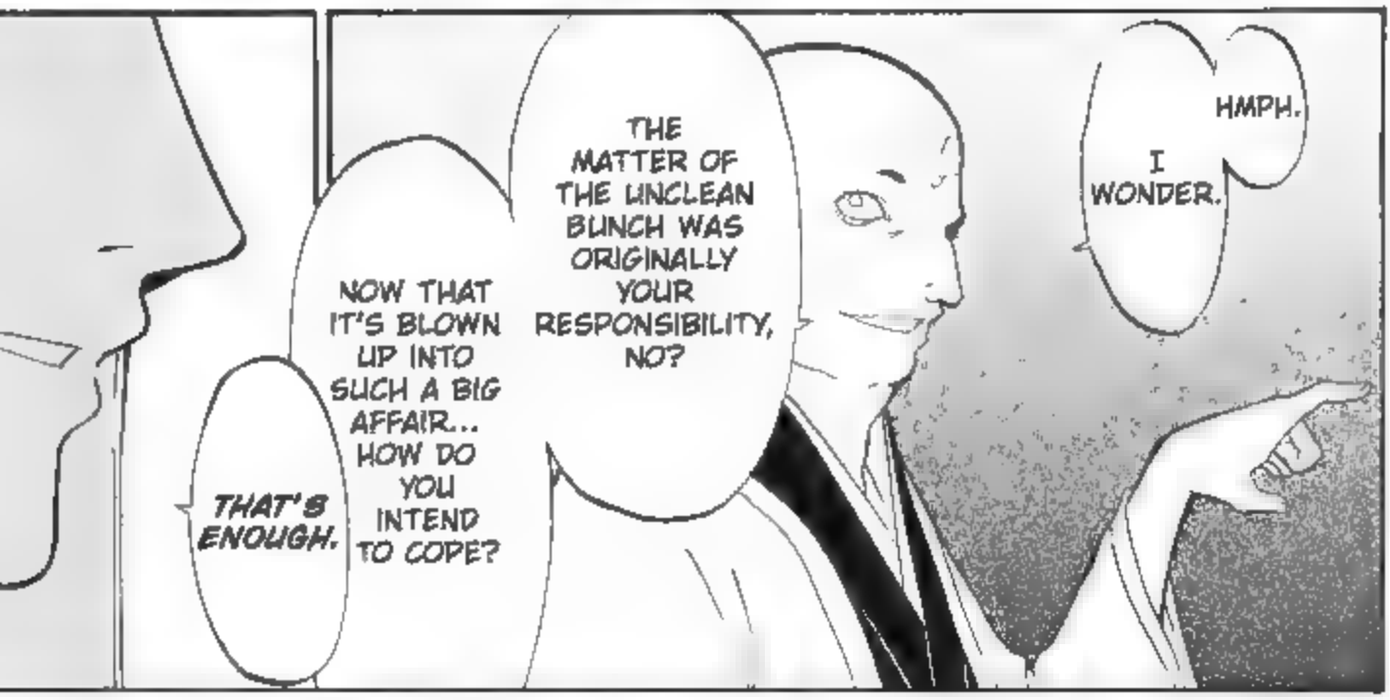

.....
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, TAKA-MINE?
..... NO.
I DOUBT THEY REALLY FAILED.

WHAT I MEAN IS THAT THEY LIKELY FORESAW THIS OUTCOME FROM THE START.
THEY WOULD NEVER COMMIT SUCH A BASIC BLUNDER.
TO THE SWARM, THEIR KING IS THEIR LIFELINE.

.....
?
... NO.
HE'S RIGHT.
BUT HOW..... COULD THEY REALLY THINK SO FAR AHEAD .....?

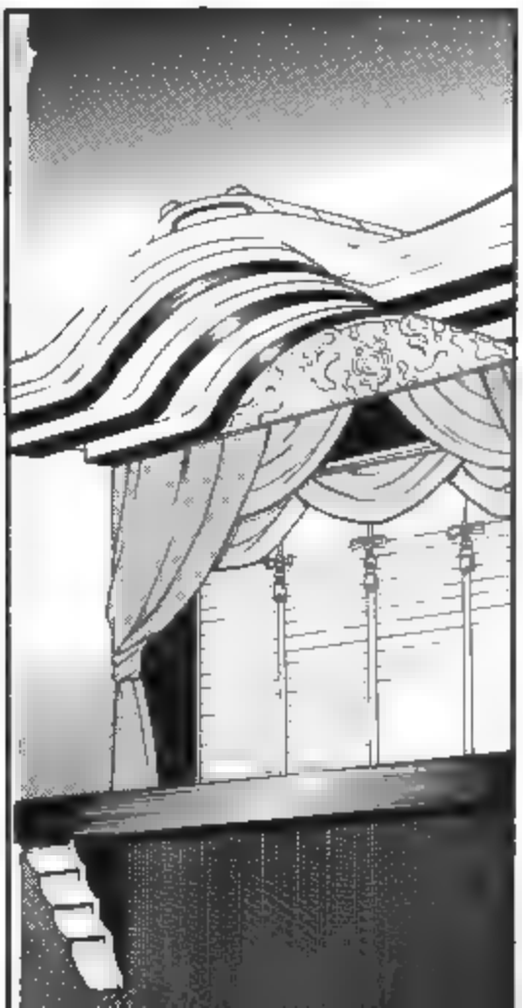
AND HE WAS YOUR DISCIPLE..... ONLY NATURAL YOU'D KNOW HOW HE THINKS.
...THE TRAITOR MONK, AKASHA SHISHIDOU, IS ASSISTING THE UNCLEAN BUNCH.
AFTER ALL...
IT'S ACTUALLY QUITE POSSIBLE..... TAKAMINE'S HUNCH .....

I..... MERELY THINK IT'S DANGEROUS TO UNDERESTIMATE THIS ENEMY.
.....BUT WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER DISCORD?
TCH.... DAMN HITTING ME WHERE IT HURTS
.....
NO.


THAT'S ENOUGH.
NOW THAT IT'S BLOWN UP INTO SUCH A BIG AFFAIR... HOW DO YOU INTEND TO COPE?
THE MATTER OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH WAS ORIGINALLY YOUR RESPONSIBILITY, NO?
I WONDER.
HMPH.

.....DAI-SOUJOU-SAMA.

I'VE ALREADY OVERLOOKED TAKAMINE'S TARDINESS AND UMEHARA'S ABSENCE. .....YOU ALL OUGHT TO KNOW THAT.
THE RITE OF DISCOURSE IS NOT A PLATFORM FOR YOUR PETTY BICKERING.



YES?
TAKA-MINE.

PLEASE..... FORGIVE ME.
. . . OF COURSE.

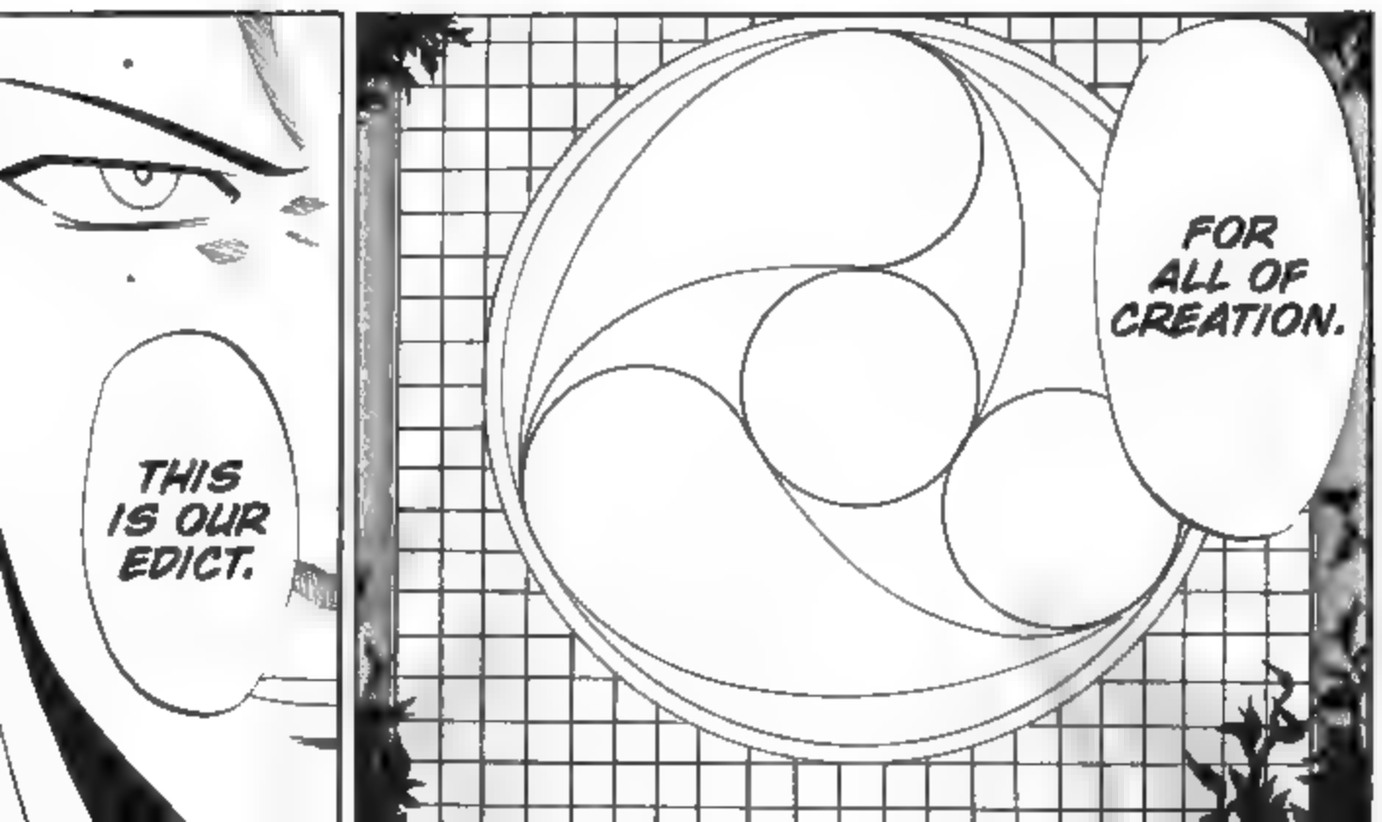
YOUR EDICT NEGOTIATIONS..... HOW DID THE TALKS GO WITH THE *EXTERNAL NONINTERVENTIONIST FORCES*?
REGARDING THE LATEST INTELLIGENCE ON THE UNCLEAN BUNCH .....

WE WILL LIKELY SEE A NUMBER OF ENGAGEMENTS, SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.
RIGHT.
BASED ON THE UNCLEAN BUNCH'S PAST PATTERNS AND TENDENCIES, WE'VE SPREAD DRAGNETS AT THE LOCATIONS THEY'RE LIKELY TO VISIT NEXT.

WE'VE MADE THEM UNDERSTAND THAT OUR DOMESTIC SITUATION WITH THE SHIKABANE OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH IS NO SMALL MATTER.
...I'VE GOTTEN IN CONTACT WITH TWELVE ORGANIZATIONS. NEARLY ALL HAVE PROMISED US THEIR COOPERATION.
AS FOR THE NEGOTI-ATIONS WITH THE FOREIGN NONINTER-VENTIONIST FORCES ...

THEY WILL MERELY SERVE AS WORKABLE BREAKWATERS.
.....
WE NEEDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
.....THEY WOULD NEVER HIDE THEIR TRUE INTENTIONS.
.....
THESE ORGANIZATIONS..... HOW FAR CAN WE TRUST THEM?

...WE WILL TAKE ANY MEASURES NECESSARY TO ELIMINATE THEM FROM OUR COUNTRY.
THAT IS, THE UNCLEAN BUNCH AND THEIR KING...
SNAP
IN THE END, WHEN IT COMES TO THIS FILTH.....


THIS IS OUR EDICT.
FOR ALL OF CREATION.

YES.
FOR ALL OF CREATION.

シュ…
FSSHH

……

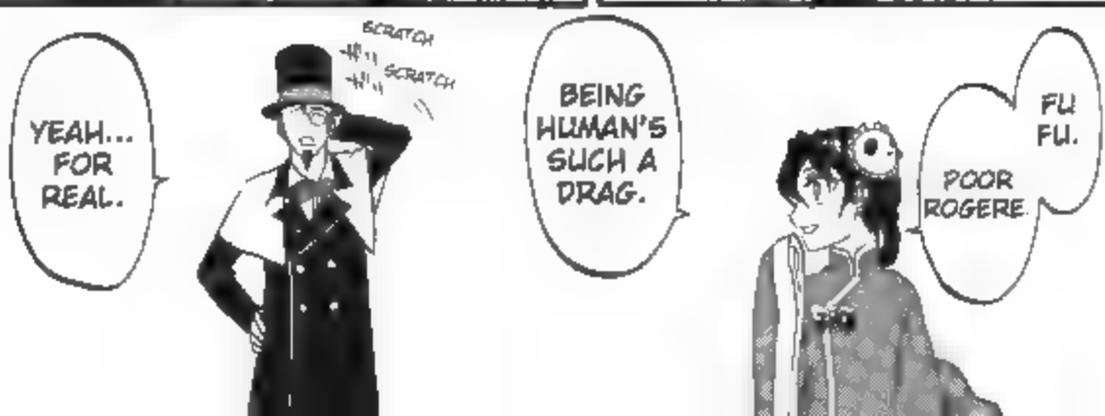
JR
岐阜駅
GIFU STATION
WE'RE HEEERE.
JANGLE

WE'VE GOTTA SEVER THE ENERGY PULSE LINE FLOWING FROM YAMA CITY OUT TO HERE.
TWIRL
I KNOW THAT.
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS PLACE.
HEY, HEY DON'T FORGET WE'VE GOT A JOB TO DO.
THEN THERE'S THAT GREAT HOT SPRING, GERO ONSEN!!
BOY, I LOVE GIFU. YOU'VE GOT GOHEI RICE CAKES, DRIED SWEETFISH, HIDA BEEF!!
HA HA HA.

YEAH, YEAH.
TWIRL
TWIRL
IN THE END, THE CITY WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO THE TABOO REALM THE KING NEEDS.
...YOU EVEN LISTENING?
RIGHT.
THEN THE PULSE LINES IN YAMA CITY WILL START GOING HAYWIRE.

I'LL GET OLD AND DIE IF I DON'T USE THAT "WAY TO BECOME A GOD" QUICKLY.
PEH ...
I DON'T HAVE AN IMMORTAL LIFE TO DITHER AWAY LIKE YOU DO.

YOU GOTTA ENJOY THE SIMPLE PLEA-SURES IN LIFE, ROGERE.
BUT THIS'D BE A LOT MORE FUN AFTER A BIT OF KILLING.


YEAH... FOR REAL.
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
BEING HUMAN'S SUCH A DRAG.
FU FU.
POOR ROGERE.

WHOOSH
SO LET'S HURRY AND—
!?
OH?
SMASH
WHOOSH

SKID
SKID
SKID
SKID
SCREEE
SKID
GAHH.
COUGH
GLK
WH-WHAT THE ...?
OOH... NOT BAD.
LOOKS LIKE YOU KNEW WE'D BE HERE.
TMP
YES.
STAND

WE WERE ABLE TO APPROXIMATE THE LOCATION OF YOUR HIDEOUT AFTER LOOKING OVER THE BLUEPRINTS FOR THOSE TRAIN TUNNELS YOU WERE USING.....
THEN WE SENT A NUMBER OF TEAMS TO THE EXITS ON THIS SIDE OF THE CITY, HOPING YOU'D NATURALLY FALL INTO OUR NETS.
JANGLE
IT WAS ONLY NATURAL TO EXPECT THAT THE UNCLEAN BUNCH WOULD COME AFTER OUR SECT ONCE YOUR KING WAS REVIVED.

...!
THE YOUNG MISS .....
COUGH
NOT LIKE WE HAD A CHOICE.
GUESS ALL THAT CRAP INVOLVED WITH MAKING THE GOD-KILLER LET YOU TRACK US DOWN PRETTY EASILY.
IS THAT RIGHT ?

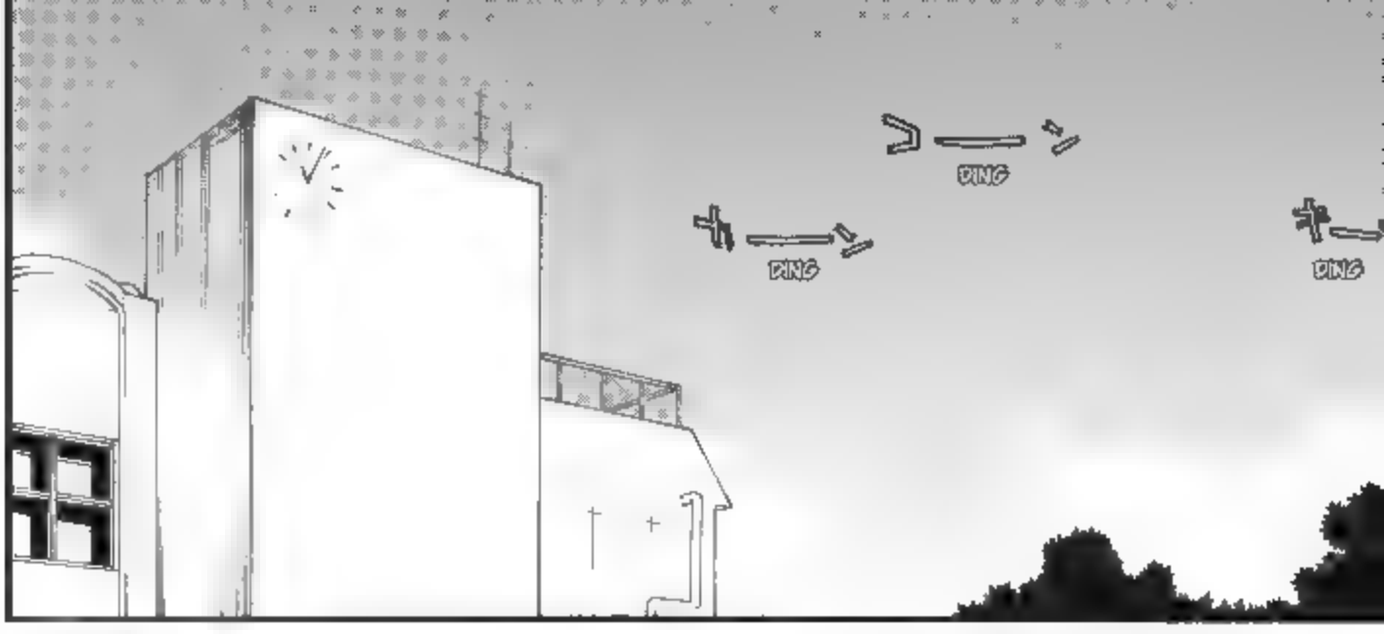
SURE.
GIVE IT YOUR BEST SHOT .....
CRACK
STEP
WE HAVE TO ASK YOU SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.
BY EDICT ...
...WE'RE ORDERED TO CAPTURE YOU.

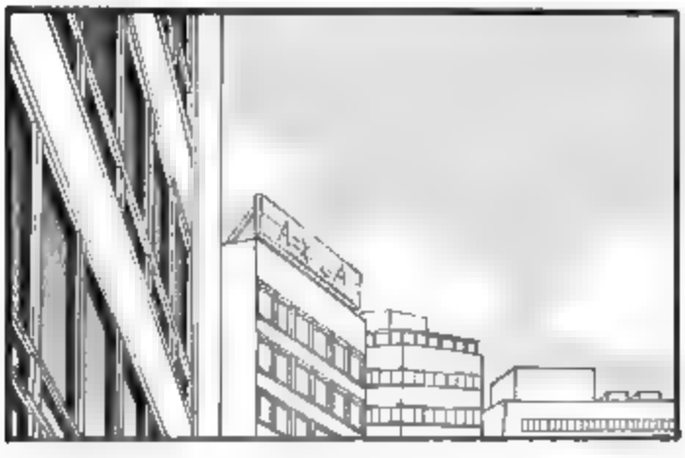
WELL, IF YOU'RE READY ...
LET'S HAVE SOME FUN, KOUGON SECT.
LICK
H-HEY .....
IT'S FINE.
BETTER THAT WE DON'T GET INTERRUPTED LATER, WHILE WE'RE WORKING.
UGH .....

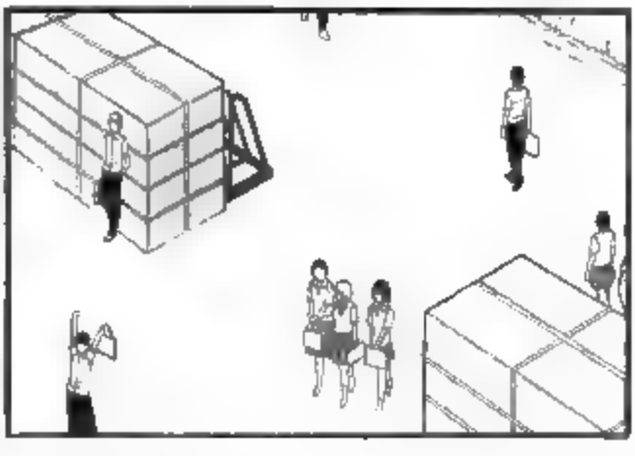
I AM GON-SOUJOU OF THE KOUGON SECT, RIKA ARAGAMI.
KAGHAK

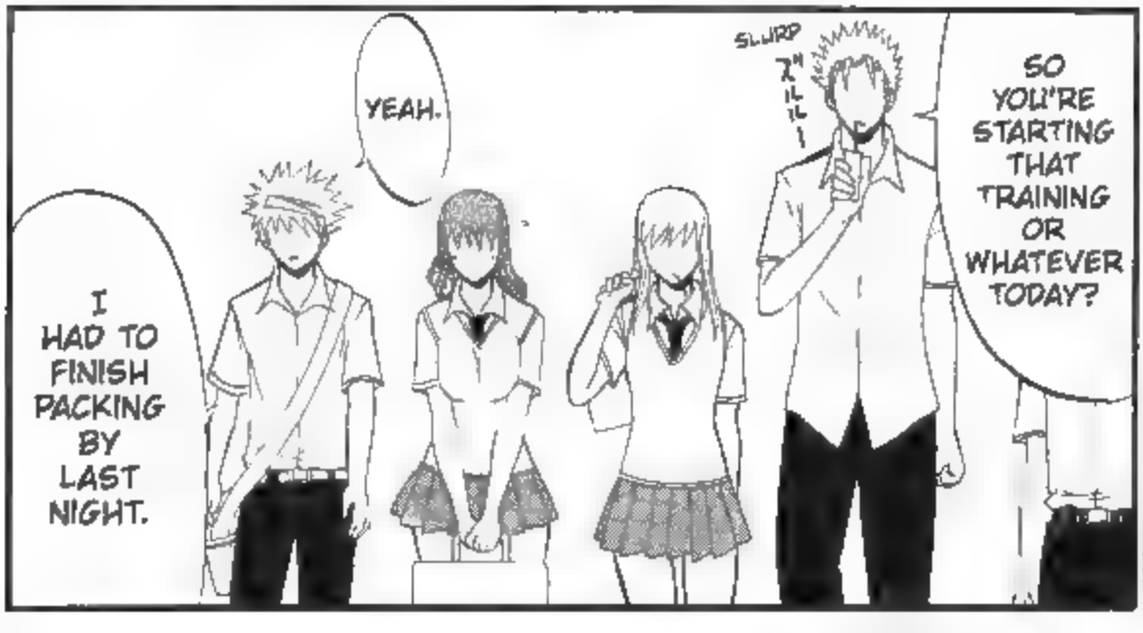
AND I WILL BEAT YOU!!
JAB
JUST TO BEAT YOU.
UNCLEAN BUNCH..... I'LL HAVE REVENGE FOR BROTHER TAGAMI!!
SHINK
BUT..... I'M NOT HERE TO ENTERTAIN YOU.

ALMOST LIKE WE KILLED SOMEONE IMPORTANT TO YOU.
...OR SOME-THING.
TWINGE
AH-HA-HA. SCARY.
HEY, HEY .... SOME-THING'S CHANGED ..... THIS SEEMS OUT OF CHARACTER?
FINE. I'LL PLAY WITH YOU.
I AM LI HONG.
UNCLEAN BUNCH FOUNDER AND JIANGSHI HERMIT, LEE LI HONG.
FOOM
!!
DASH


DING
DING
DING





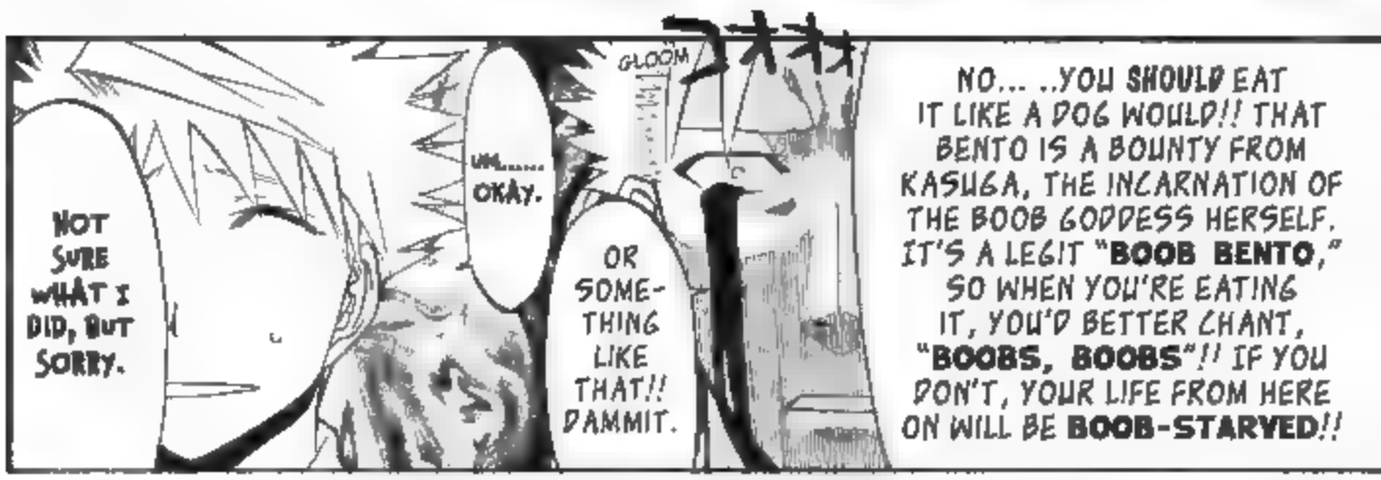

I HAD TO FINISH PACKING BY LAST NIGHT.
YEAH.
SLURP
SO YOU'RE STARTING THAT TRAINING OR WHATEVER TODAY?

EH?
SLURP
FRESH AND DELICIOUS PROCESSED SOY MILK

THE SOONER THE BETTER... I'M ITCHING TO GO.

.....
THAT RIGHT .....?
ALL RIGHT. SEE YA NEXT SEMESTER.
RIGHT.
AH!
SHOVE
KA-SUGA.
STOP SPACING OUT ALREADY. COME ON.
I WAS GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU THIS MORNING... SO IT MIGHT'VE GOTTEN COLD..... BUT IF YOU STILL WANT IT.....
MAYBE FOR ON THE TRAIN...OR...
UHH... THIS BENTO... I...MADE IT.....
BECAUSE I HEARD YOU WERE LEAVING AT NOON .....
...
AH..... UMM..... KAGAMI-KUN.
HERE...
HMM?

I'M NOT THAT GROSS !!
DON'T WORRY, KASUGA. I BET HE'LL INHALE IT LIKE A DOG IN A DOG FOOD COMMERCIAL.
TWINGE
I'M SURE I'LL LOVE IT
OH. THANKS


NOT SURE WHAT I DID, BUT SORRY.
UM..... OKAY.
GLOOM
OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT!! DAMMIT.
NO... ..YOU SHOULD EAT IT LIKE A DOG WOULD!! THAT BENTO IS A BOUNTY FROM KASUGA, THE INCARNATION OF THE BOOB GODDESS HERSELF. IT'S A LEGIT "BOOB BENTO," SO WHEN YOU'RE EATING IT, YOU'D BETTER CHANT, "BOOBS, BOOBS"!! IF YOU DON'T, YOUR LIFE FROM HERE ON WILL BE BOOB-STARVED!!

I'M OFF!
ANYWAY..... THANKS!!

SO YOU'VE SAID YOUR GOOD-BYES.
IDIOT.
YEAH.
HOSHI-MURA-SAN..... DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE HERE.
EH?
AH..... YEAH .....?
HUH?
ANY GUY WHO MAKES A GIRL SAD AND CAUSES HER TO WORRY IS AN !DIOT .....
.....
AT LEAST THAT'S BEEN 100% TRUE FOR ME..... ALL IDIOTS.

OPEN
FLAIL
FLAIL
FLAIL
.....
HUH!! H-HOLD ON.....!!
.....
LET'S SEE. THIS...AND THIS..... AH!!
RIGHT! HOSHIMURA-SAN!!
CLOSE
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO MEET UP WITH THE PROTECTOR.
.....
LET'S GO.
SHE SEES A FAMILY RESEM-BLANCE, MAYBE?
MUST BE ABOUT BIG BRO.

LOOKING FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU.

SO BEFORE TRAINING STARTS, I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU THAT.....
.....WITH BIG BRO'S FUNERAL..... AND ALL THAT, I FORGOT TO SAY IT.....

LET'S DO THIS .....
..... SAME TO YOU.
S—
... OH.
?
..... WELL... IF YOU'RE ALL PACKED, LET'S GO.
WE'RE HEADED FOR WAKAYAMA PREFEC-TURE.
THE KOUGON SECT'S HOLY MOUNTAIN— MT. GORYOU.
YEAH !!

.....
SO HIGH .....

EH?
OH..... RIGHT.
THAT'S JUST FOR TOURISTS.
NOT THAT ONE.
THIS ONE.

.....
BUT WE ALREADY WALKED THREE KM.
THE TRAINING TEMPLE FOR WARRIOR MONKS IS ON THAT FAR-OFF PEAK.
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
.....
CAN'T SEE IT
HMM? WE USE THIS PATH CARVED BY WILDLIFE, OF COURSE.
HOW EXACTLY DO WE GET UP THERE ...?
.....UM.
MT. GORYOU IS SMACK DAB IN THE MIDDLE OF THE KII MOUNTAINS, THIS NEAR ENDLESS MOUNTAIN RANGE.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
YOU CAN'T GO ON BY CAR ONCE YOU REACH THAT FRONT GATE WE WERE JUST AT. PART OF THE TRIP JUST HAS TO BE WALKED.
HAA.
HAA.
CRAP... MY BODY'S NOT DOING GREAT.
AFTER BEING IN THE HOSPITAL AND ALL.

RUSTLE
WITH THE COMING OF THE MEIJI AND SHOWA ERAS, IT WAS MOVED TO THE CITY.
STEP
STEP
STEP
THE ORIGINAL HEAD TEMPLE OF THE KOUGON SECT WAS HERE, BUT...
WHEEZE!
WHEEZE!
WHEEZE!
..... CHATTING WAS THE PERFECT WAY TO PASS THE TIME. WE'RE HERE.

GLOOM

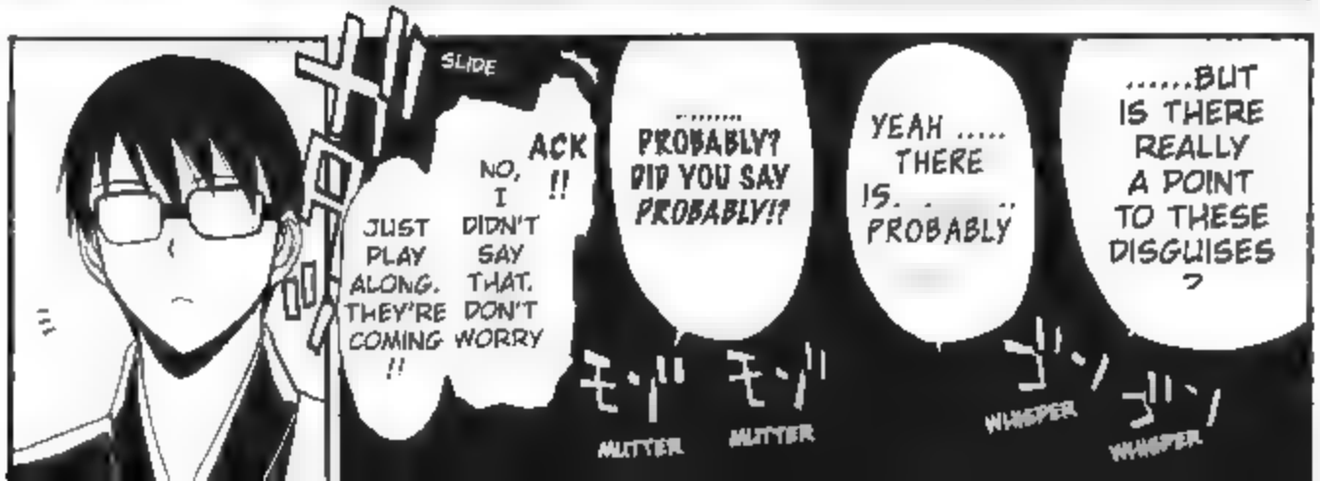
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
..... YOU OKAY?
I'LL BE FINE.

LOOKS MORE LIKE A HAUNTED HOUSE THAN LAST TIME .....
HMM.. YOU'RE RIGHT.

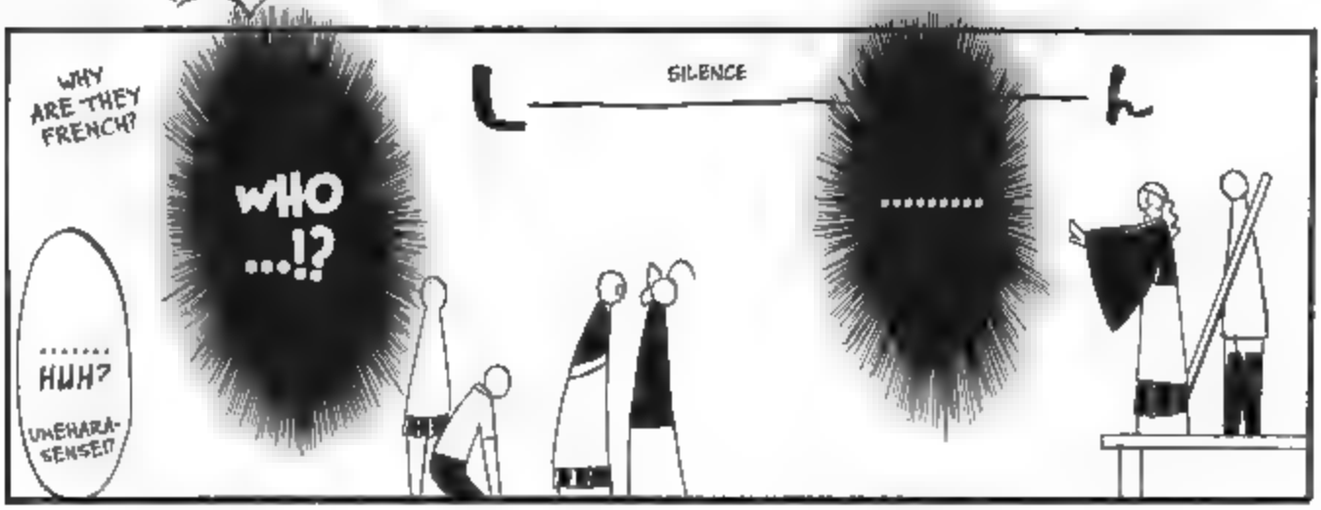
THINK YOU CAN KEEP UP, OURI?
...WE'LL DO SOME SERIOUS TRAINING.
ANY-WAY.
FOR THE NEXT MONTH ...

WHEEZE
.....YES!

YES I'M GOOD
THEY'RE HERE..... YOU ALL READY?
... KU KU KU.


SLIDE
ACK !!
NO, I DIDN'T SAY THAT. DON'T WORRY
JUST PLAY ALONG. THEY'RE COMING !!
.....PROBABLY? DID YOU SAY PROBABLY!?
YEAH ..... THERE IS. . . .. PROBABLY
.....BUT IS THERE REALLY A POINT TO THESE DISGUISES ?
MUTTER
MUTTER
WHISPER
WHISPER

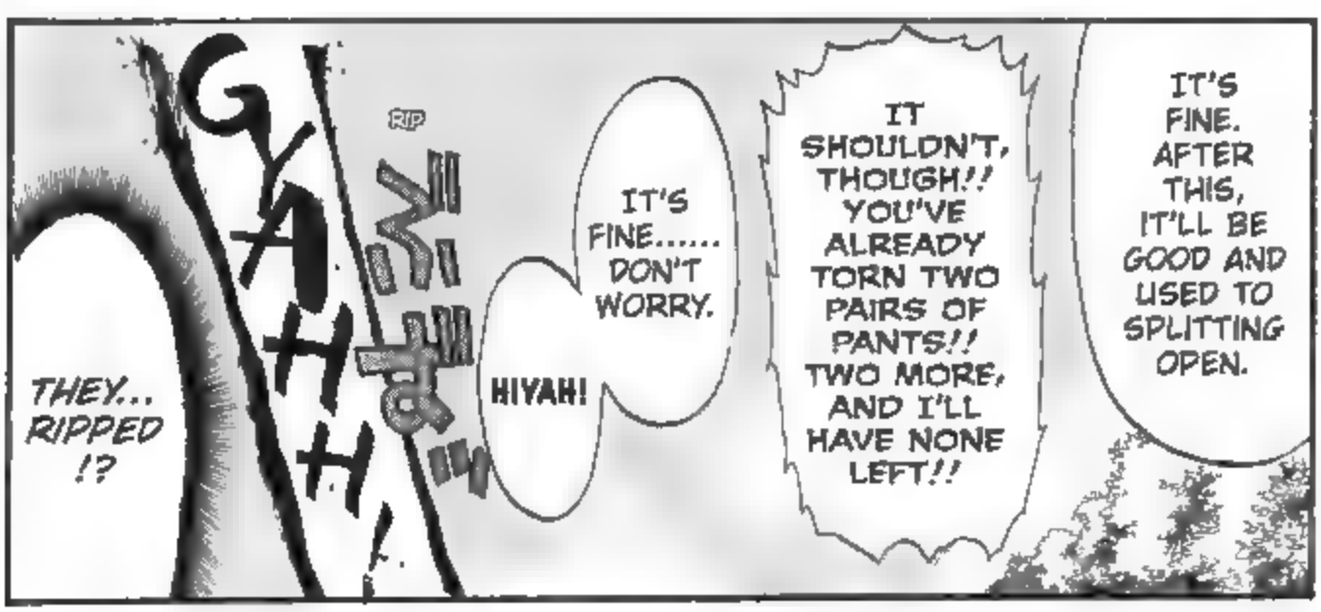
BAM
WELL MET, FRIENDS !!
WE ARE THE GUARDS OF THIS TEMPLE.
MYSTE-RIOUS FRENCH, CHIEF PRIESTS !!


WHY ARE THEY FRENCH?
WHO ...!?
SILENCE
.....
..... HUH?
UMEHARA-SENSEI?

DEATH 23: TEN DEATHS

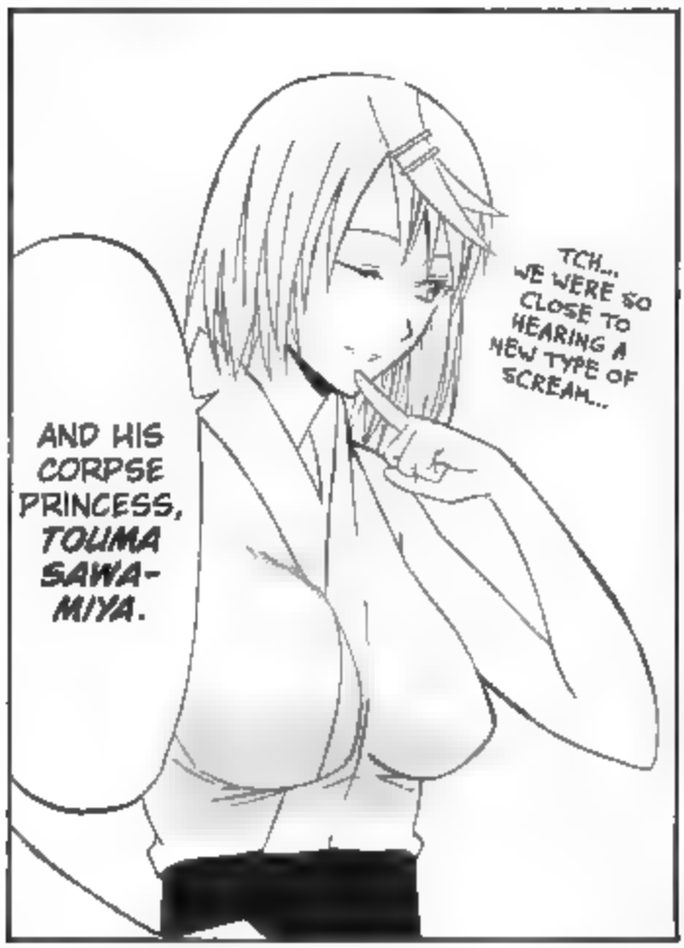
WHAT THE.....!? WHAT'S GOING ON.....
MY BUTT'S GONNA SPLIT OPEN!!
JUST 20,000 MORE HITS.
HOW ABOUT YOU OVERCOME THIS HURDLE AND SHOW ME THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOR?
OUCH!! THAT HURTS, SAWA-MIYA !!

DEATH 23: TEN-DEATHS


THEY... RIPPED !?
RIP
GYAHH!
HIYAH!
IT'S FINE..... DON'T WORRY.
IT SHOULDN'T, THOUGH!! YOU'VE ALREADY TORN TWO PAIRS OF PANTS!! TWO MORE, AND I'LL HAVE NONE LEFT!!
IT'S FINE. AFTER THIS, IT'LL BE GOOD AND USED TO SPLITTING OPEN.

WHY'D WE HAVE TO BE FRENCH, ANYWAY?
EVERY DAMN TIME.....HE WORKS THESE UNFUNNY GAGS, GETS TOUMA INVOLVED, AND EMBARRASSES HER.....
JUST... A LITTLE PUNISH-MENT.
SIZZLE
SIZZLE
SOB SOB SOB SOB
HOLD ON, TOUMA-SAN!! FORGIVE HIM!!
WAIT !!
LET'S GET THIS STICK ANOTHER TWO METERS DEEPER.
.....AH! JUST THINKING BACK MAKES ME MAD.
SLIDE
GRIND GRIND
GYAHHH!
SIGH .....
...UM, ANY-HOW.
SO SCARY !!
OHHH... .. YOU SAVED ME, TAKAMASA! THAT'S MY PUPIL, FOR YOU.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TAME THE SUPER SADIST BEAST FROM THE SADISM GALAXY . . ...
.....TCH.
SO CLOSE.
SILENT
.....
"SEN-SEI"?
YOURS, TAKAMASA-SAN!
.....
NO...I CAN TELL YOU'RE LYING.
YEAH. I AM.
FLINT
WHY ELSE? IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN MY BELOVED PUPIL.
SENSEI... WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HMM?

QUIET
SHH
HA-HA-HA. WELL, HOW WAS IT? OUR LITTLE SKIT?
I USED SOME EYE DROPS TO MAKE THOSE FAKE TEARS..... QUITE THE THESPIAN, AM I NOT?
AN-OTHER LIE ...!!
HE'S TOTALLY LYING !!


TCH... WE WERE SO CLOSE TO HEARING A NEW TYPE OF SCREAM..
AND HIS CORPSE PRINCESS, TOUMA SAWA-MIYA.

HA HA HA.
ALLOW US TO INTRODUCE OURSELVES AGAIN.
I'M KANECHIKA UMEHARA, SOUJOU OF THE KOUGON SECT.

FWUMP
I RECEIVED AN EDICT ABOUT OUR COUNTER-MEASURES FROM THE DAI-SOUJOU, SO I'VE BEEN RUNNING AROUND CONTACTING PROTEC-TORS.
YES.
YOU KNOW THE UNCLEAN BUNCH REVIVED THEIR KING, RIGHT?
TAKAMA-SAN...IN REGARD TO YOUR QUESTION, I'M JUST HERE BY COINCI-DENCE.

ROLL
ZENBUNOSE
(EVEN MORE OF A HAIKOZ VERSION) KINKI REGION LIMITED EDITION

AMAZING ...!! HE'S EVEN MORE OF A DIRTY OLD MAN THAN BEFORE .....!!
THIS GUY.
HE REALLY THINKS WE'LL BE FOOLED BY THAT EXPLA-NATION !?
I MUST'VE BEEN DESIRING THIS SO MUCH THAT IT JUST MANIFESTED BEFORE ME!!
KA-HA-HA-HA.
A WORM-HOLE, THAT MUST BE IT!!
A SUPER-NATURAL PHENOME-NON!!
...HMPH.

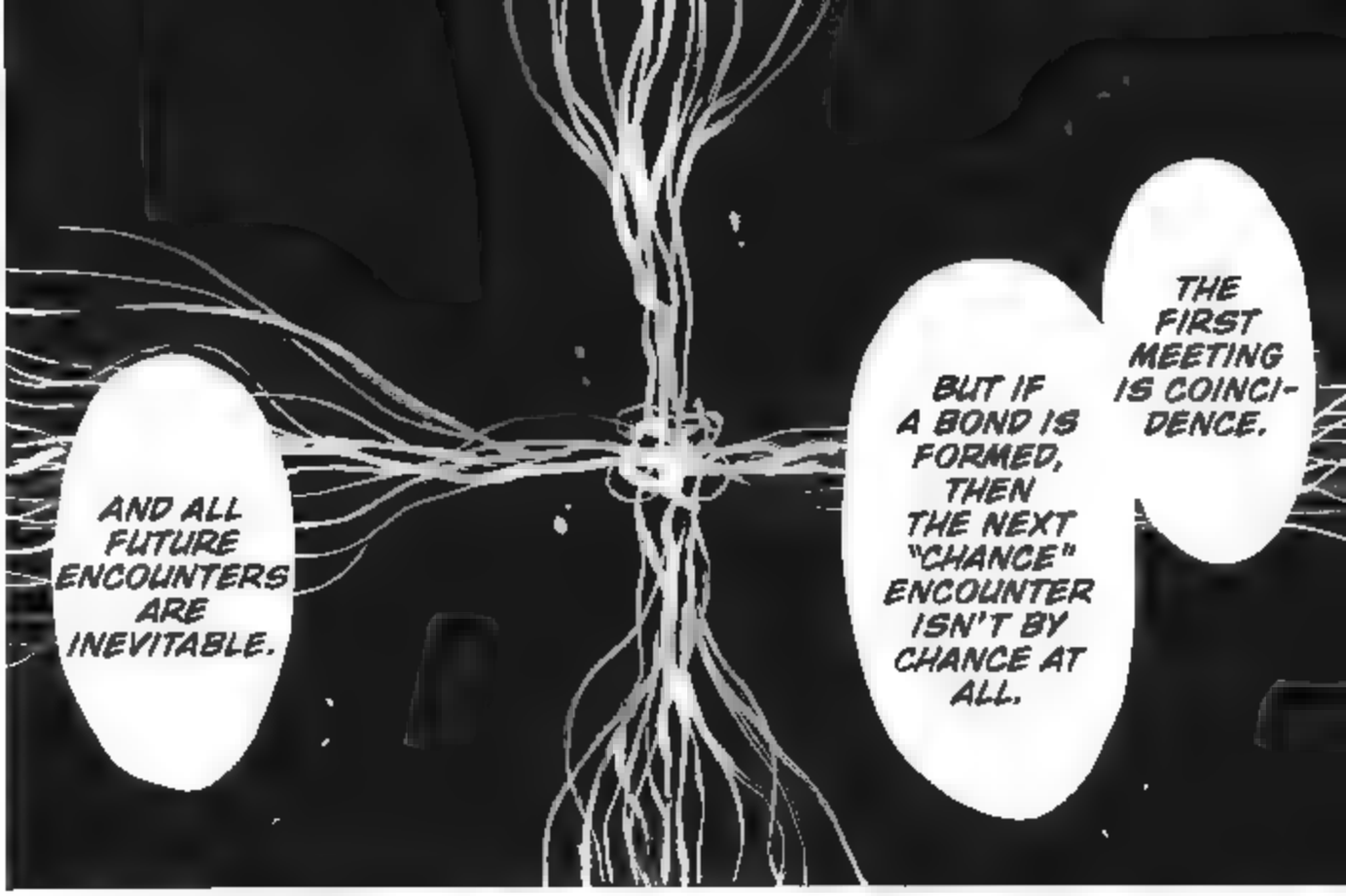
BUT I'M HERE TO HELP WITH YOUR TRAINING !!
SHOCK
Y-YOU DON'T MEAN IT!!
FINE, YES, I BOUGHT THAT ZENBUNOSE FIGURE!!
JUST GO HOME ALREADY. ..... SENSEI.
TAKE THAT WITH YOU.
I KIND OF LIKE HIM.
AH..... HE'S GOT THE SAME TASTES AS BIG BRO.

DOESN'T IT MAKE MORE SENSE FOR ME TO TRAIN OURI-KUN IN MY FREE TIME?
!?
.....EH?
OR WERE YOU PLANNING TO HELP THIS BOY WHILE ATTENDING TO YOUR OWN TRAINING?
THAT DOESN'T SOUND EFFICIENT TO ME.
...!
.....SPE-CIALTY OUT-FITS?
YOU MEAN... FOR CORPSE PRINCESSES?
LET'S GET READY, THEN!!
YOU GIRLS— CHANGE INTO YOUR SPECIALTY OUTFITS AND MEET BACK HERE!!
YES.
SENSE!
SILENT
THANK YOU!
BOW
NO.
FWIP
WHAK
...ANY AND ALL CORPSE PRINCESSES ON MT. GORYOU HAVE TO WEAR MY HOMEMADE ZENBUNOSE OUTFITS.....
YES! IT'S DECIDED THAT FROM NOW ON...
RIP
RIP
RIP

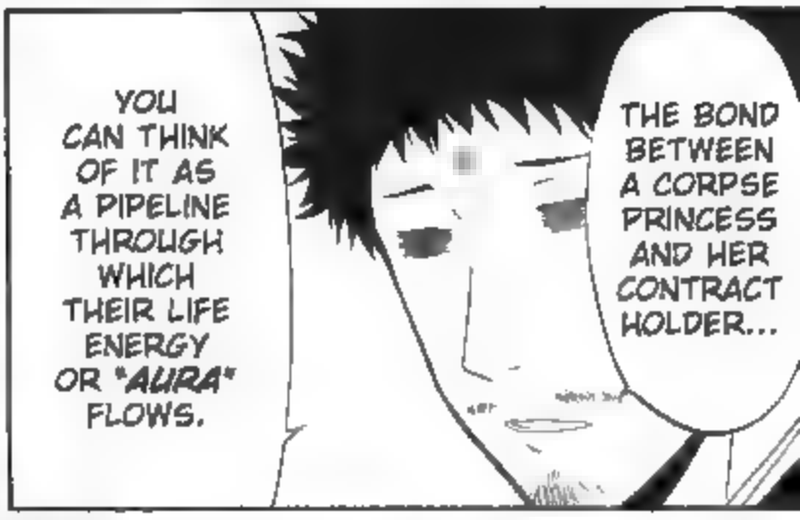
DID SHE JUST HIT HIM NORMALLY .....!?
WHAT WAS THAT LAST ONE?
SOUJOU... TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY.
.....OKAY
HA HY U.
WHAP

.....UMM.
OURI-KUN AND MAKINA-CHAN. YOU WILL COME WITH ME AND SAWAMIYA TO LEARN ABOUT "BOND" TRAIN-ING.
EH? OKAY... YOU MEAN THAT "BOND"?
YES
TAKAMASA AND ITSUKI ALREADY KNOW THE BASICS, SO THEY'LL DO THEIR OWN TRAINING.
YES.
SO NOW YOU'LL SPLIT UP AND TRAIN SEPA-RATELY.
HE LOOKS SO DEJECTED...
FORCED INTO A SUBMISSIVE POSITION, EVEN THOUGH HE'S A SOUJOU...

PEOPLE ARE TIED TO EACH OTHER IN COMPLICATED AND SUBTLE WAYS. YOU MIGHT'VE ALSO HEARD IT CALLED "FATE" OR "KISMET."
YEAH. THE SAME BOND AS IN, "EVEN A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE IS DECREED BY THE BONDS OF DESTINY."


THE FIRST MEETING IS COINCI-DENCE.
BUT IF A BOND IS FORMED, THEN THE NEXT "CHANCE" ENCOUNTER ISN'T BY CHANCE AT ALL.
AND ALL FUTURE ENCOUNTERS ARE INEVITABLE.

.....
.....
OHH.
I SEE.


YOU CAN THINK OF IT AS A PIPELINE THROUGH WHICH THEIR LIFE ENERGY OR "AURA" FLOWS.
THE BOND BETWEEN A CORPSE PRINCESS AND HER CONTRACT HOLDER...

?

YES.
GO GET CHANGED INTO YOUR TRAINING GEAR, BOTH OF YOU.
LET'S GET STARTED WITH THE TRAINING.
.....
YES.

BADUM
WHAT THE HECK !?
WAIT.
WE'RE CHANGING IN THE SAME ROOM !?

W-W-WAIT. SHE STARTED STRIPPING!! CI MEAN, DUHD CRAP!! THIS IS GONNA BE BAD!! A SONG!! THAT'S IT, I'LL START SINGING TO DISTRACT MYSELF!!
OH CRAP!! I'M NOT SURE WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT THIS, BUT I CAN JUST IMAGINE SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENING!!

CAN YOU PIPE DOWN !!
WHAT'S WITH THE OUTBURST?
!?
EXCUSE ME!!
HEYY!!
uWAHHH WHOA WHOA, BA BAN BA BAN BAN, BAN B ABA BAN, BABAN BA, BAN BA, BAN BA, BAN..

.....
I WANTED TO TRY PUMPING MYSELF UP FOR IT.
HA-HA... IT'S JUST THAT WE'RE ABOUT TO START TRAINING.
..AH, SORRY.

NOW I'M... JUST BULLYING HIM...
.....
GIVEN THAT YOU JUST LOST HIM.
.....DON'T DO IT...
JUST..... EXPECTED YOU TO BE MORE DOWN IN THE DUMPS.
EVER MOVING FOR-WARD.
EH?
AH..... SURE.
.....
CLENCH
I COULDN'T SAY IT BACK RIGHT AWAY.
AFTER YOU SAID THAT.... I.....
LOOKING FORWARD TO HANGING WITH YOU.
WHEN I WENT TO MEET YOU.....
.....
...THAT'D BE ADMITTING THAT KEISEI IS REALLY GONE.....I FELT LIKE I WAS ABOUT TO LOSE A PART OF MYSELF .....
BECAUSE IF I'D REPLIED TO YOU...

I'VE .....
.....
DIDN'T YOU..... FEEL THAT WAY.....AT ALL?
YOU ...

... ALREADY BAWLED MY EYES OUT.

LIKE I WAS READY FOR ANYTHING... THAT SORT OF FEELING.
AND IT WAS LIKE A BUR-DEN WAS LIFTED... AFTER-WARD.
I CRIED 'TIL I WAS OUT OF TEARS ...

..... BUT ME...
HOSHI-MURA-SAN..... YOU HAVEN'T CRIED YET, HAVE YOU?

WEIRD THAT A CORPSE PRINCESS WOULD GET ALL COMPETITIVE WITH HER CONTRACT HOLDER.....

...? HE SEEMS PUMPED.
YEAH!
SHOULD WE GET STARTED, THEN?
OH.... YOU'RE ALL CHANGED.
FIRST, TAKE A LOOK OVER HERE.
..... IT'S... A RABBIT ?
AW. SO CUTE.
EH? OH..... OKAY.
TAKE IT OUT OF THE CAGE AND HOLD IT.
STEP
.....
...IT'S GONE.
EH?
OH... OKAY.
NOW RELEASE IT INTO THE MOUNTAINS.
TMP
TMP

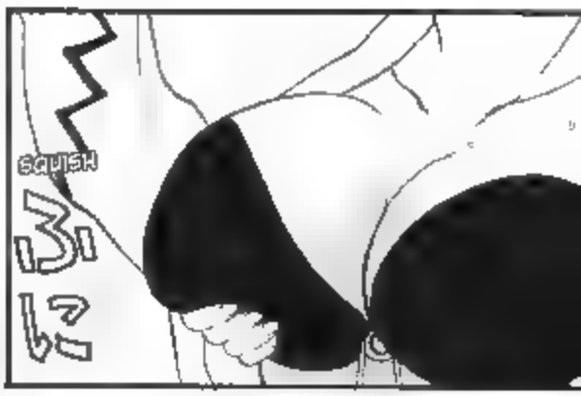
EHHH !?
SHOCK
GO CATCH THE RABBIT YOU JUST LET GO.
FOR YOUR FIRST AUSTERITY TRAINING ...
OF COURSE, RUNNING AROUND THE MOUNTAINS WILL ALSO IMPROVE YOUR BASIC STAMINA.
YOU NEED BOTH TYPES OF TRAINING, SO THIS IS TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE, REALLY.
RIGHT ...!
A FAINT BOND WAS FORMED BETWEEN YOU AND THE RABBIT WHEN YOU HELD IT JUST NOW.
IF YOU PICK UP ON THAT BOND, YOU CAN TRACK DOWN THE RABBIT.
AND YOU'RE OFF.
OH, RIGHT! TO INSPIRE YOUR COURAGE, I'LL STAY BY YOUR SIDE AND SING THE OPENING THEME SONG TO ZENBUNOSE.
BURNING, BURNING WITH CUTENESS. BURNING THROUGH THE DEPTHS OF SPACE. ♪
AT THIS RATE ...!
THAT RABBIT'S GONNA RUN IF HE GETS ANYWHERE NEAR IT.....!

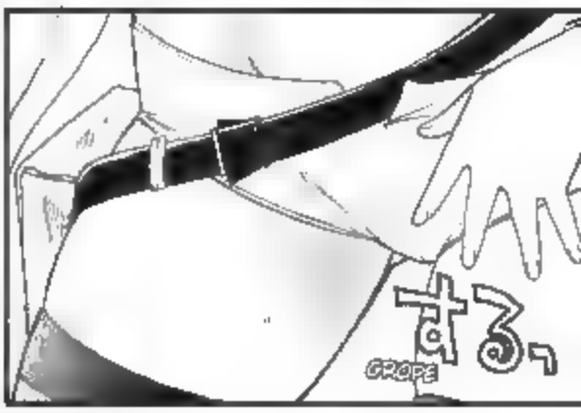
SKID.
HAA.
HAA.

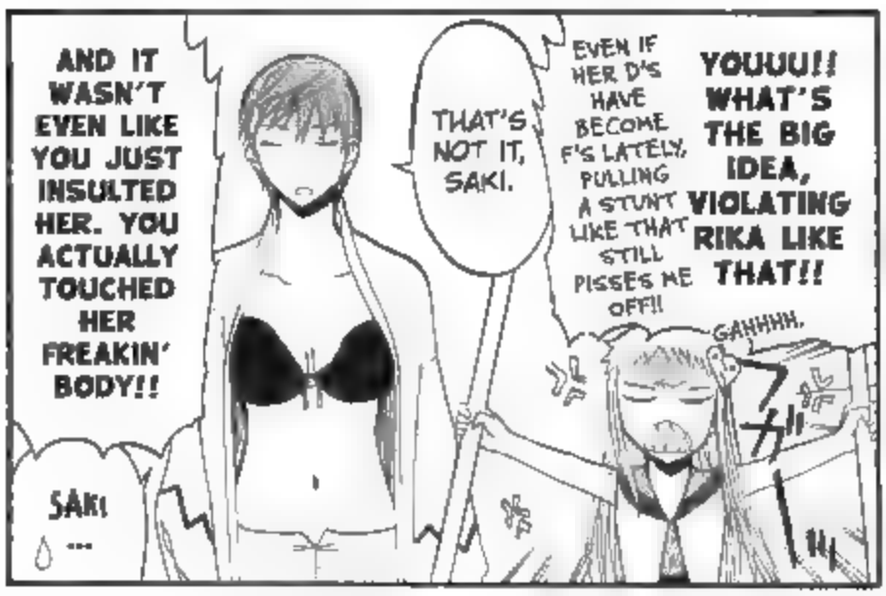
.....
TWINGE
NO!
IS THIS REALLY AS SERIOUS ...
...AS THE KOUGON SECT CAN GET?
HEY, YOU DONE AL-READY ?
THAT RIGHT HAND..... IT'S A RITUAL TOOL.
JUST GOTTA FOCUS ON DODGING THAT.
THAT'S THE SPIRIT.
AND IF YOU MAKE LIGHT OF US..... IT WILL BE YOUR LOSS, LEE LI HONG!
WE'RE JUST..... GETTING STARTED!
SKID
WHOOSH
HA HA.
SMASH
DAH !!
TMP
HAH.

STEP
SLASH
SLASH
SLASH
SKID
SLASH
SLASH

WHOOSH
!!
GROPE
!
HUH.....?
THIS WOMAN .....






AND IT WASN'T EVEN LIKE YOU JUST INSULTED HER. YOU ACTUALLY TOUCHED HER FREAKIN' BODY!!
SAKI ...
THAT'S NOT IT, SAKI.
EVEN IF HER D'S HAVE BECOME F'S LATELY, PULLING A STUNT LIKE THAT STILL PISSES ME OFF!!
YOUUU!! WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, VIOLATING RIKA LIKE THAT!!
GAHHHH.

BOTTLE: KOUGON SECT'S SOUMA

THIS IS... SOUMA, ISN'T IT?
KOUGON SECT MONKS USE IT TO PUT THEMSELVES ON SHIKABANE LEVEL, PHYSICALLY.
SORT OF LIKE STEROIDS.
!

.....
... WHAT OF IT?
...THAT MEANS YOU CAN ACTUALLY TRACK MY MOVE-MENTS..... RIGHT?
AND IF YOU'RE USING THIS NOW, MA'AM...

...IT MUST BE...
...BECAUSE WE STOLE A VERY IMPORTANT PERSON FROM YOU, YES?

SMASH
BUT USING SOUMA COMES WITH SOME NASTY SIDE-EFFECTS.

IF YOU'RE GOING ALL OUT, LIKE THIS ...
TEE HEE.
SORRY, MA'AM.

SHINK
HE WAS... VERY DEAR TO MY HEART.
YES ...
.....
TWITCH
FWSH
SEALED MANDALA RELEASE.
GOLDEN CLAWED FIST!!

STAY BACK, ROGERE.
RIGHT.
TOO SCARY.
SHE'S FINALLY GETTING SERIOUS.
A SEALED MANDALA..... THAT'S WHEN A KOUGON SECT MONK USES A RITUAL TOOL TO PERFORM "MIRACLES." THEY'RE THE STRONGEST RITE-BASED TECHNIQUES THEY'VE GOT.
RIGHT!
I GUESS IT WAS WORTH *TEASING* YOU A LITTLE.

I OUGHT TO TELL YOU..... THERE'S NO USE IN RUNNING FOR THAT HOLE YOU CRAWLED OUT OF.
THE OTHERS TEAMS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN SEARCHING AND SEALING OFF THE TUNNELS.
..... YOU'RE CONFIDENT.
YOU KNOW ABOUT SEALED MANDALAS, YET STILL YOU WISH TO FACE US ALONE?

HMPH .....
YOU REALLY... BELIEVE THAT?
YOU HAVE NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN.
FEW.
AND WE'RE DUE TO RECEIVE BACKUP AT ANY MOMENT.

OH. OHHH... SCARY..... BOTH OF THEM ARE SERIOUS NOW.
WHOOSH

SAKI. COVER ME.
OKAY.
BUT..... I'LL END THIS BEFORE BACKUP EVEN ARRIVES.
YES ...

DASH

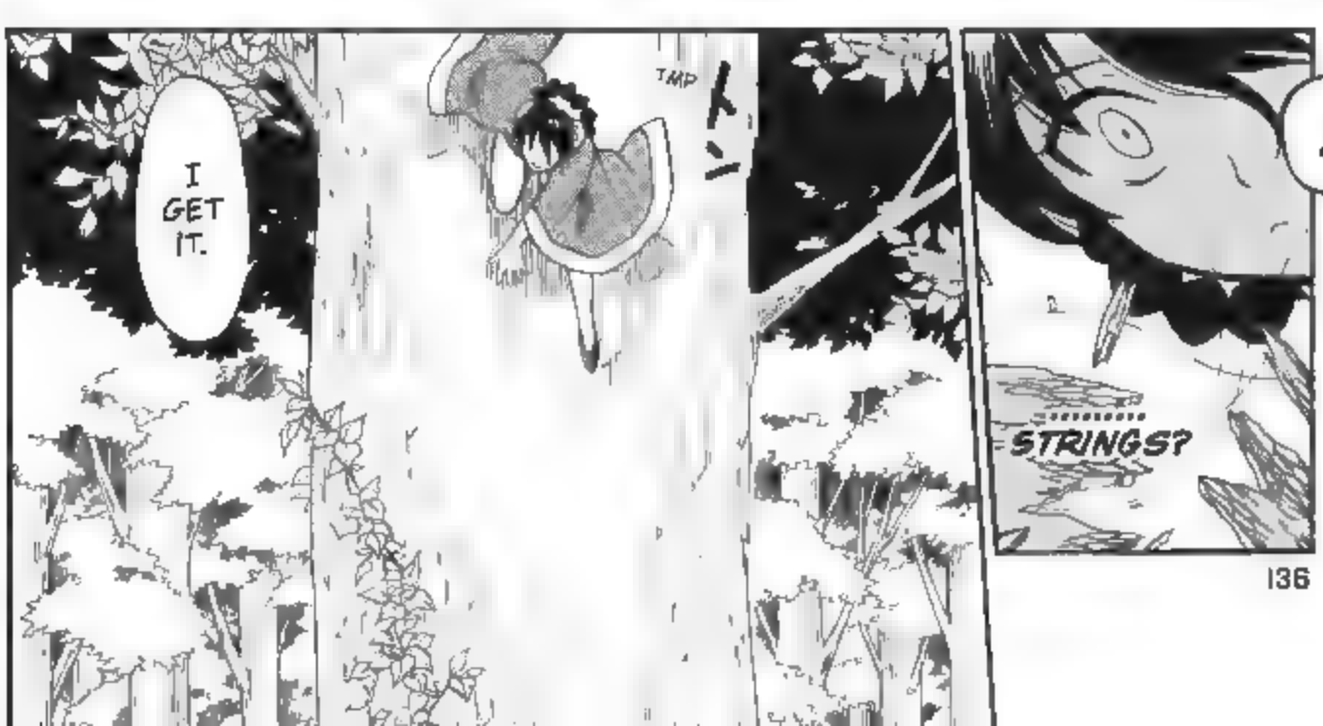
WHACK
WHACK
WHACK
SLASH
SLICE
WHOOSH
WHAK
WHAK
WHAK
I SUPPOSE... THIS IS THE POWER OF A FOUNDER.
EVEN A POWERED-UP MONK AND HER CORPSE PRINCESS ARE NO MATCH..... THEY CAN'T TOUCH HER.
INCREDIBLE .....
..... OHH .....!
NOT TO MENTION .....
...SHE STILL HASN'T ...
FWOOSH
SHE'S GOT ZERO OPENINGS .....
SHE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THE YOUNG MISS'S WEAPON IS CAPABLE OF, SO SHE'S NOT TOUCHING IT.....

UGH .....
TCH.
WHAM
SKID
GREAT, GREAT.
AH, AH.

...LAID MY TRAP.....!
I'VE ALREADY .....
GOLDEN CLAWED FIST.
BIND-ING ...!
KACHAK
STRONG... STRONGER THAN I EXPECTED .....
HM.
HOWEVER .....!
SPIN
SPIN
SPIN

FOOM
HERE I GO!!
RE-LEASE !!
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
?
WHAT'S THAT SOUND?
SLAM!
!?
WROOSH

RE-
LEASE
!!
I WON'T LET
YOU GET AWAY
.....!
FWOOSH
FWOOM
HIYAH!
CRACK


I
GET
IT.
TMP
!
.....
STRINGS?

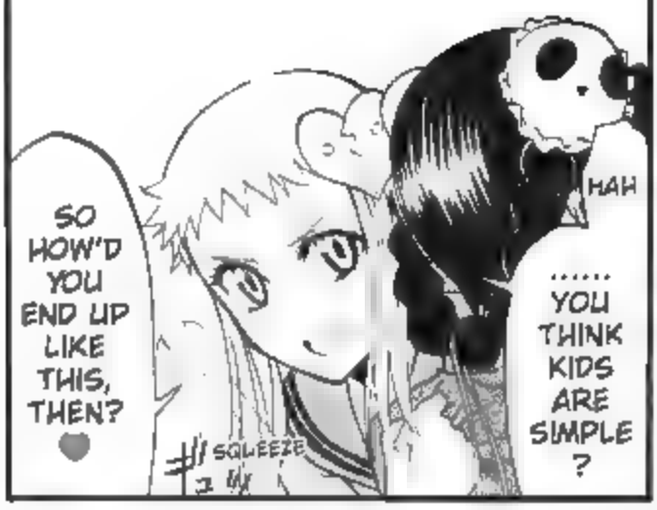
DURING OUR EXCHANGE EARLIER ...
...YOU USED THOSE SCALPEL-LIKE CLAWS AND SOME SUPER-THIN STRINGS ...
...TO DO A LITTLE "SURGERY" ON THIS WHOLE AREA.
...!
YES.

WHOOSH
BAM

AMONG THE HOLY FAMILIES, THE ARAGAMIS ARE KNOWN FOR OUR EXEMPLARY MEDICAL TECH-NIQUES.
HAA...
THIS GOLDEN CLAWED FIST IS A SPECIALTY TOOL THAT TAKES THAT POWER TO ITS LIMIT!!
TAUT
TAUT
THE STRINGS ARE LIKE NERVES THAT CONCEAL THEM-SELVES.
WHICH THEN REACT TO EVERY MOVE OF MY FINGERTIPS .....!
WRAP
SLICE

NO USE.
I CAN SEE IT COMING AND DODGE.
BECAUSE I GET IT NOW.
THE TRICK.
TUMBLE
!
TAKO
CRACK
SMASH
THIS IS FOR TREATING ME LIKE A LITTLE KID!!
DUMMY !!
SPLINTER
SPLINTER
!!

TENSE
AH, AH.
FWISH
!
SLAM
WHAM
DID I HURT YOUR FEELINGS?
CRACK
CRACK
I WAS JUST TELLING THE TRUTH.
DROP
BITE ME.
!?
TACKLE
TMP
TMP
TMP
SWISH
...!


SO HOW'D YOU END UP LIKE THIS, THEN?
SQUEEZE
HAH
..... YOU THINK KIDS ARE SIMPLE ?

SWISH
SQUEEZE

...TO GET CAUGHT WITH ME.....
FROM THE START... SHE MEANT TO SACRIFICE HERSELF.
YOU ...

CHARGE

FLIK
...TO FINISH THIS!!
AS LONG AS THE STRINGS HOLD.....
AND NOW .....

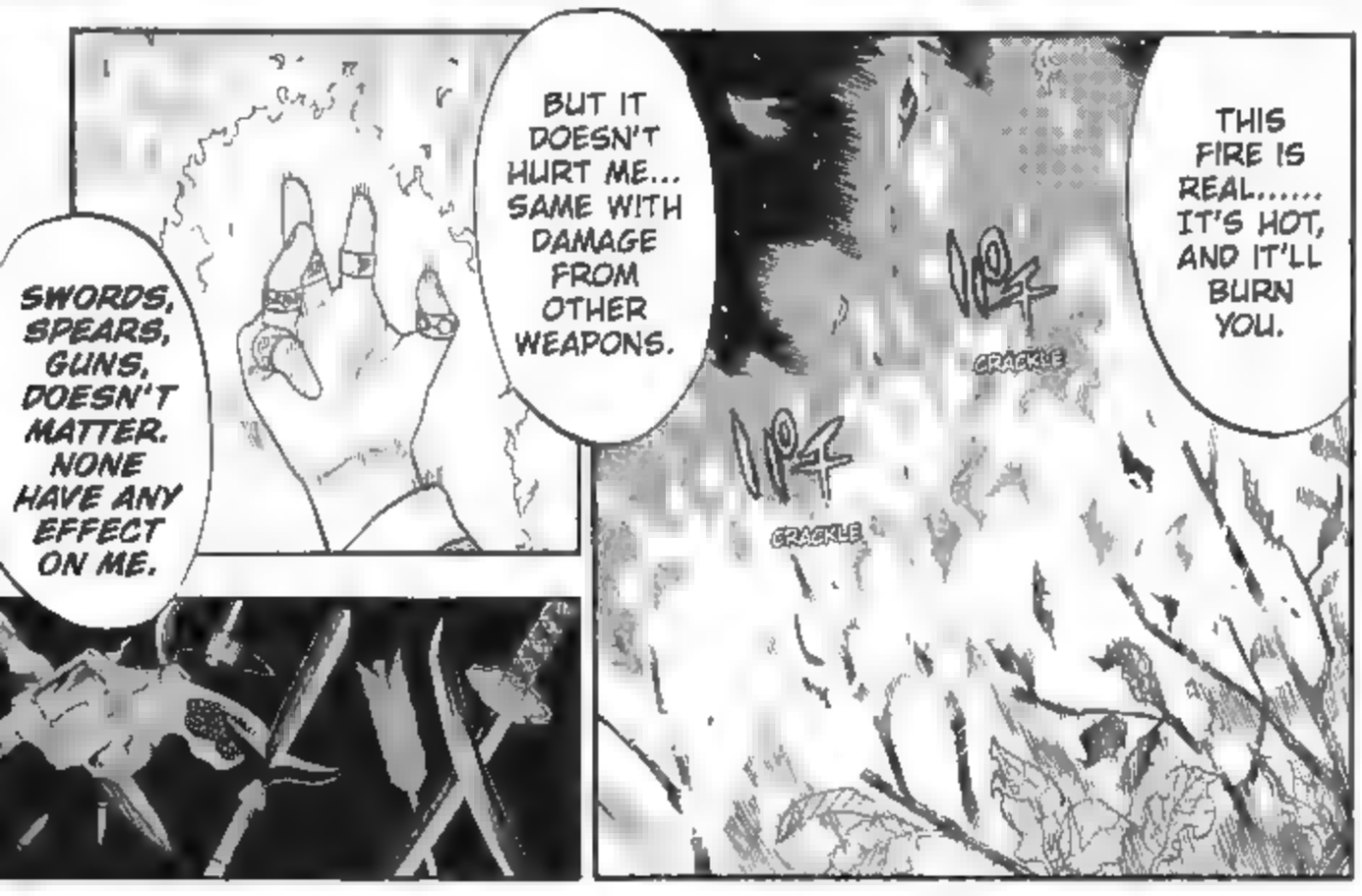
!?
FWOOM
CRACK
HOT .....
FIRE .....?
FROM WHERE .....!?
FOOM
CRACK
HOW.....?
EH ...?
!?
SHUDDER
SKID
SKID
SAKI !!
THUD
AH... GAH !!

OHHHH.
CREEP
POOM

AND..... WHAT ARE THOSE FACES AROUND HER.....!?
...CAME RIGHT OUT OF HER BODY.....
..... THAT FIRE .....

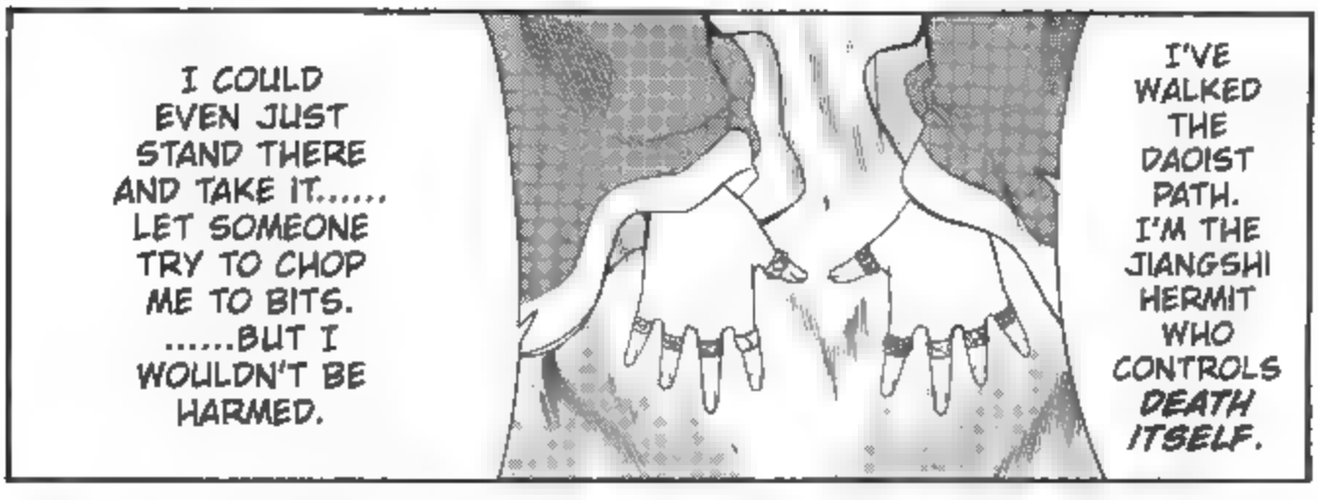
SCRATCH
AND THEY PROTECT ME FROM EACH PARTICULAR DEATH.
WITHIN MY BODY RESIDE DEMONS REPRESENTING EACH OF THE TEN DIFFERENT "DEATHS."
LINED UP
LET ME INTRO-DUCE YOU.
THESE CHILDREN ARE PYROKIN. THEY'RE SPIRITS WHO LIVE IN MY BODY HEAT AND WHO EMBODY "DEATH BY BURNING."
CREEP
CREEP

...
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN ACTUALLY DIE.
THAT'S WHY...


SWORDS, SPEARS, GUNS, DOESN'T MATTER. NONE HAVE ANY EFFECT ON ME.
BUT IT DOESN'T HURT ME... SAME WITH DAMAGE FROM OTHER WEAPONS.
THIS FIRE IS REAL..... IT'S HOT, AND IT'LL BURN YOU.
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

...!
...THAT UNDER-ESTIMATING YOU WOULD BE MY LOSS... RIGHT?
MA'AM. EARLIER, YOU SAID...

THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE, THOUGH.
NO MATTER WHAT MIRACLES YOU WHIP OUT..... A HUMAN COULD NEVER DEFEAT A FOUNDER LIKE ME.

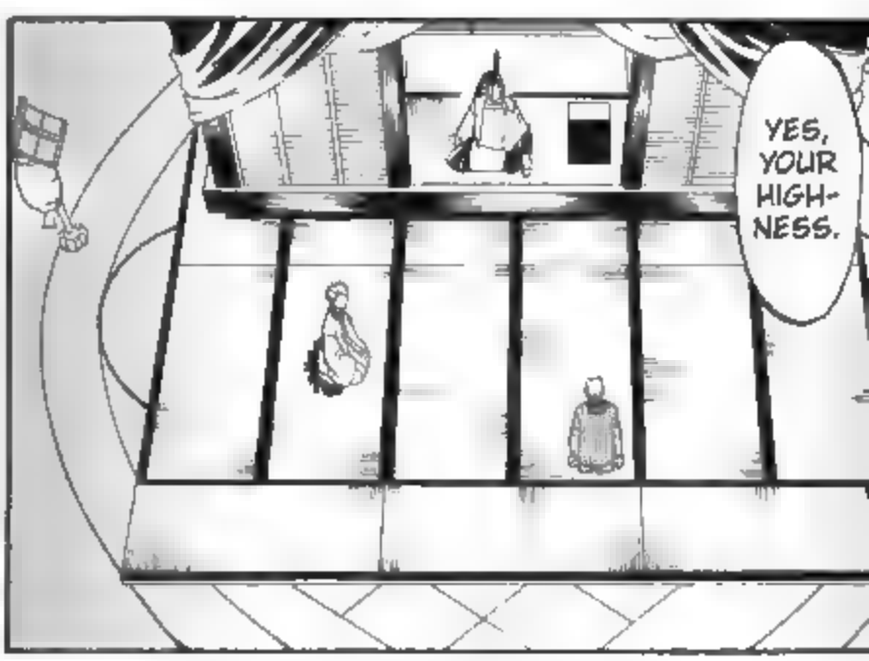

I'VE WALKED THE DAOIST PATH. I'M THE JIANGSHI HERMIT WHO CONTROLS DEATH ITSELF.
I COULD EVEN JUST STAND THERE AND TAKE IT..... LET SOMEONE TRY TO CHOP ME TO BITS. .....BUT I WOULDN'T BE HARMED.

GET IT?
NO MATTER WHAT YOU TRY, I CAN'T LOSE.
TCH !!
!
TMP.

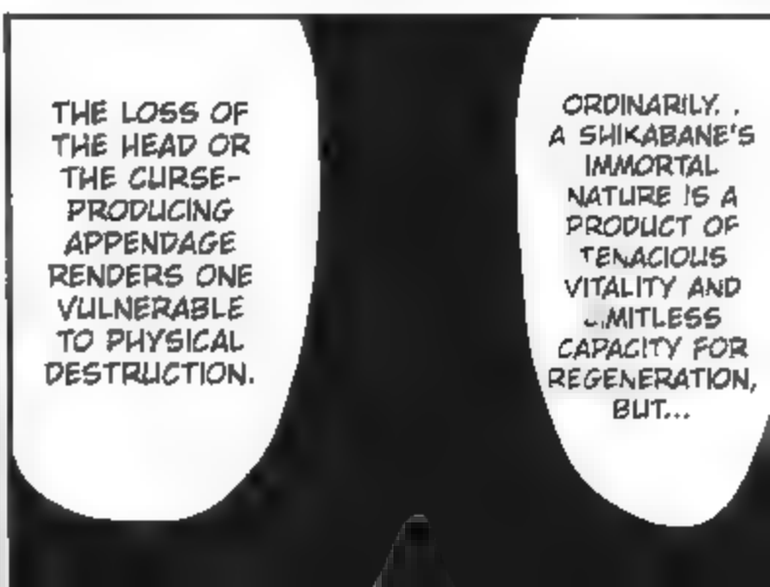
!!
BOOM
AH.
RIGHT. I'VE GOTTA ASK YOU SOMETHING.
...I'M SO STRONG IT'S ALMOST UNFAIR! ♡
HEH-HEH.
ADVANCE
SORRY.
EVEN WHEN USING JUST ONE OF MY "DEATHS" .....
...
WHAM
SLAM
GAH!
HEY
WHICH DO YOU PREFER- SMOKED MEATS OR STRAIGHT-UP BARBECUE?

A TRUE IMMORTAL?

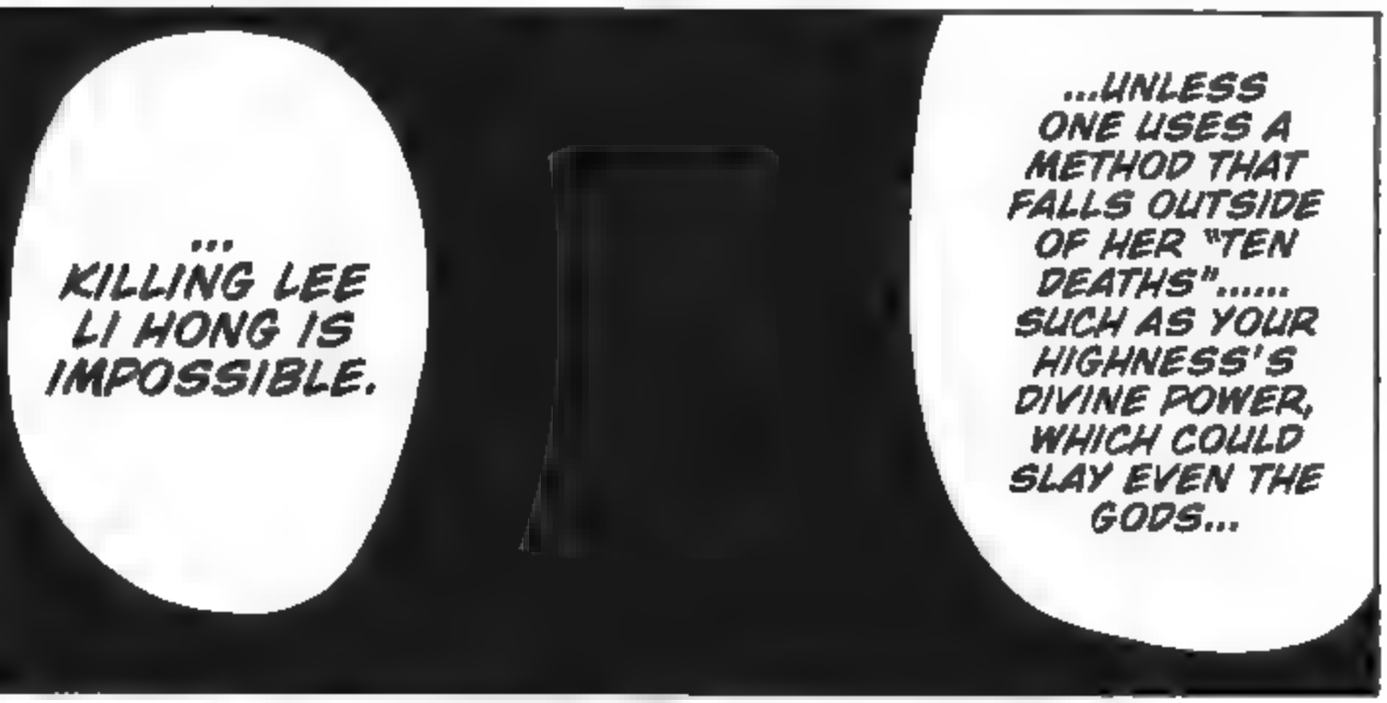
THAT IS LEE LI HONG'S ...
... CURSE.


YES, YOUR HIGH-NESS.

HER CURSE PROTECTS HER FROM EVEN THAT SORT OF HARM. SHE IS THE EMBODIMENT OF DEATH.
HOW-EVER... IN LEE LI HONG'S CASE...


THE LOSS OF THE HEAD OR THE CURSE-PRODUCING APPENDAGE RENDERS ONE VULNERABLE TO PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION.
ORDINARILY. . A SHIKABANE'S IMMORTAL NATURE IS A PRODUCT OF TENACIOUS VITALITY AND LIMITLESS CAPACITY FOR REGENERATION, BUT...

CORRECT.
.....
WHEN BATTLING HER...
SO..... THERE'S NO WAY TO OFF HER?
OHH.


...
KILLING LEE LI HONG IS IMPOSSIBLE.
...UNLESS ONE USES A METHOD THAT FALLS OUTSIDE OF HER "TEN DEATHS"..... SUCH AS YOUR HIGHNESS'S DIVINE POWER, WHICH COULD SLAY EVEN THE GODS...

YES ... ... YOUR HIGHNESS.
AND NATURALLY, IT IS A KING'S DUTY TO LEARN ABOUT HIS ACTIVE RETAINERS.
AMUSING... SUCH ENTERTAINING STORIES, SHISHIDOU. THE PERFECT WAY TO PASS THE TIME UNTIL MY KINGDOM IS ESTABLISHED.
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'RE SAYING I COULDN'T BEAT HER.
GRIP
KU KU KU.
TWINGE

KOOM
ゴゴゴゴ
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
WHEN DID IT..... HOW LONG'S IT BEEN.....?
.....IT'S NIGHTTIME....
HOT...
RIKA!!
!!
JUMP

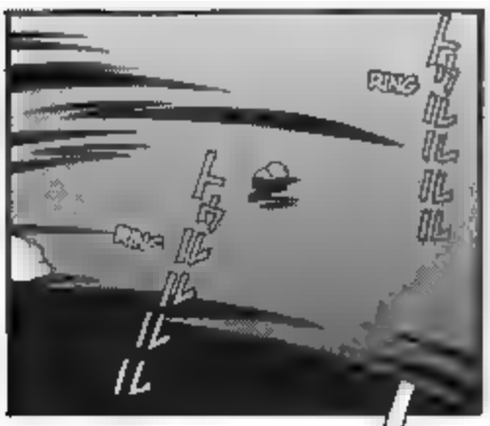
TCH .....
THAT MEANS THEY TOOK RIKA SOMEWHERE.
... SHE'S GONE ...
DON'T TELL ME...
BUT I REGENERATED. I'M STILL ALIVE, SO...
BUT .....
I HAVE TO SAVE HER .....!!
CRACKLE
WHAT CAN I DO, ALONE .....?
FOOM
AGAINST AN ENEMY CAPABLE OF THIS.....

BEEP
BEEP
BEEP
RING
CLICK
RING
RING
MAYBE I CAN REACH THE TEAMS WAITING AT THE OTHER EXITS .....
..... CRUD ...!
I'LL ...
BUT THE OWNER OF THIS PHONE'S NOT IN ANY SHAPE TO ACCEPT YOUR CALL.
I HEARD THIS RINGING AND THOUGHT I MIGHT AS WELL PICK UP.
..... HEY THERE.
WHO..... ARE YOU.....?
!! THIS..... ISN'T ONE OF THE TEAM MEMBERS !!
OHH .....
WHAT ABOUT... THE TEAM?
I'M..... YOUR ENEMY.
SHOULDN'T BE HARD TO GUESS.

THEY DIDN'T PUT UP MUCH OF A FIGHT.

THAT IS, ASSUMING THEY WERE WAITING AT THE HOLES WE CAME OUT OF.....
CALL THE OTHER TEAMS, AND YOU'LL PROBABLY HEAR MORE OF THE SAME.

!!


RING
トゥルルル
RING
トゥルルル

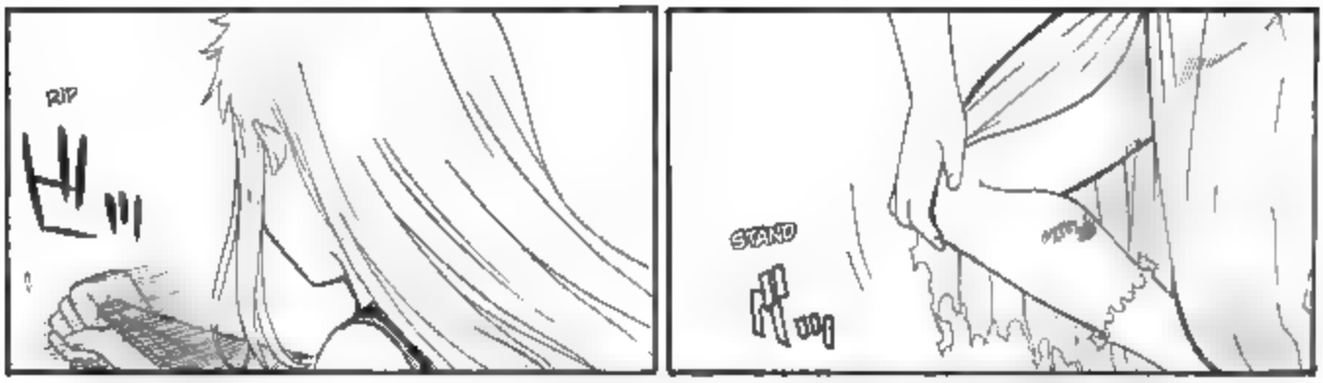
RING
RING
BEEP
BEEP...
BEEP...

DAMN.....
30"
SLUMP
...!
CLICK

RING
トゥルルル
Connected
Soki Amose

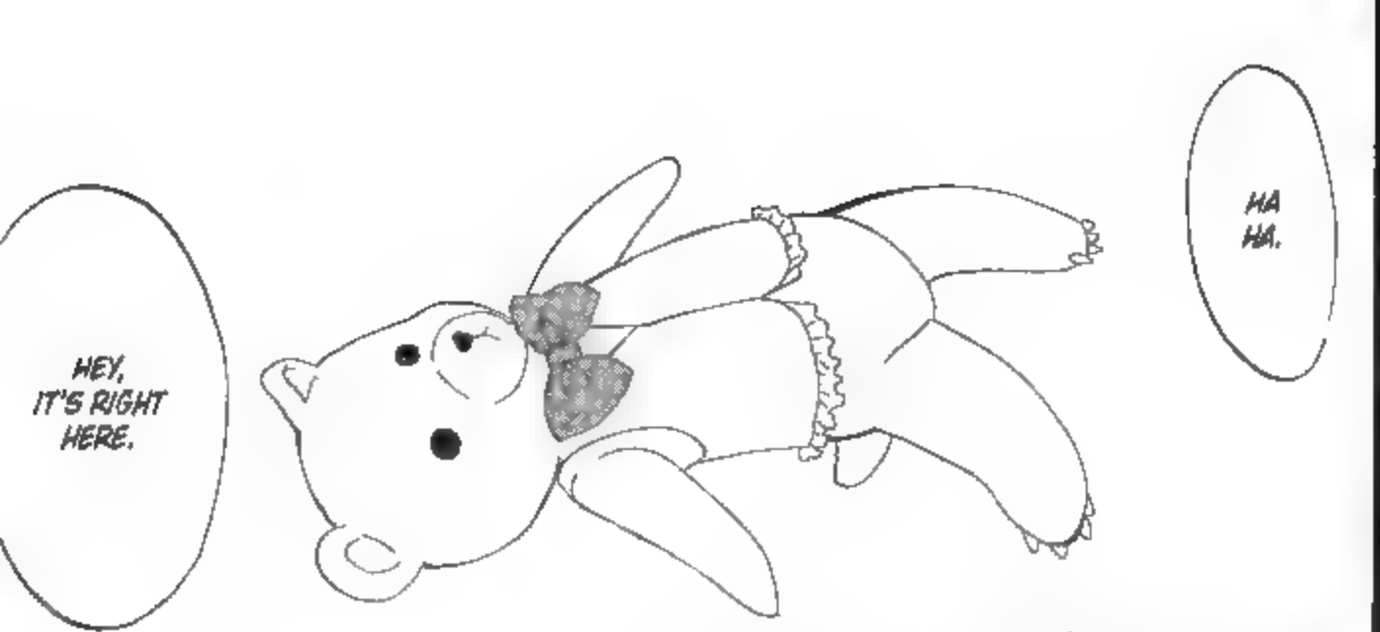
RING
..
RING
...
RING
...
RING
...
CLICK
MUTTER
.....
.....
MUTTER
...
RING
...
EVERY TEAM... WAS WIPED OUT ...!!
ペタン
COLLAPSE
.....
NO.. WAY .....
CLAK
.....

NOT, DONE YET.....!!
THIS ISN'T OVER.....!
NO !!
GRIND
.....
!!
SLAM
.....THINK, THINK...WHAT GOOD AM I AS A CORPSE PRINCESS .....!?
IF I GIVE UP, RIKA'S DEAD.....!
IF I'M GONNA SAVE RIKA .....
I'LL HAVE TO TRACK THEM DOWN BEFORE THEY GET BACK TO THEIR HIDEOUT .....!!
THAT'D BE TOO LATE .....!
EVEN IF I REQUEST BACKUP FROM THE NEAREST PROTECTOR, IT'D TAKE HALF A DAY FOR THEM TO GET HERE...

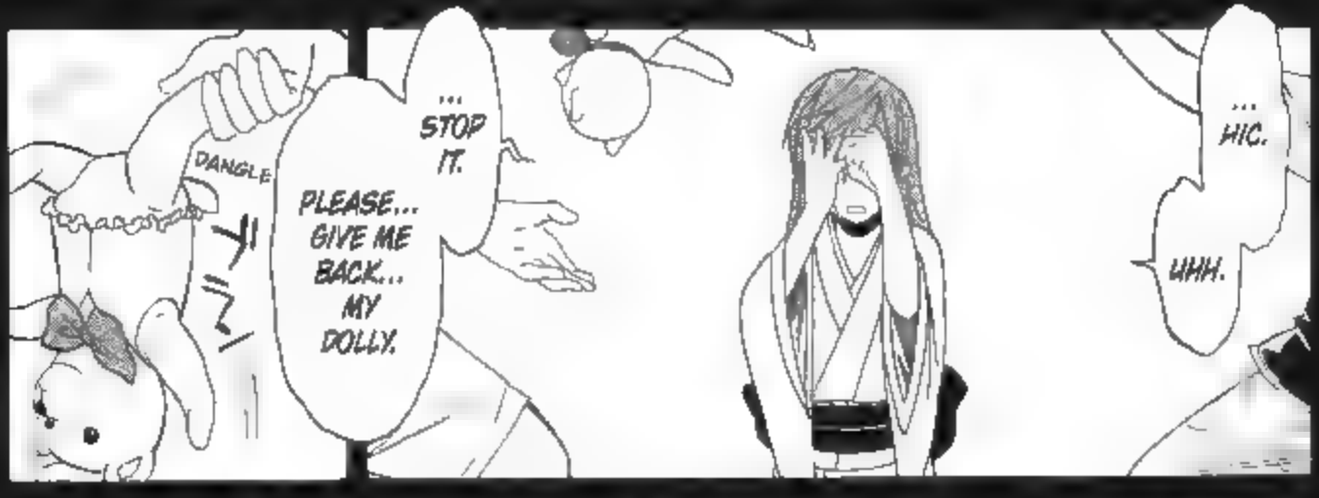

RIP
STAND

I'LL CHALLENGE THEM ALONE..... FIGHT THEM ON MY OWN.....
I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE .....!!
RIP
RIP

THOSE SHIKABANE .....!



DEATH 24: BONDS AND TIES

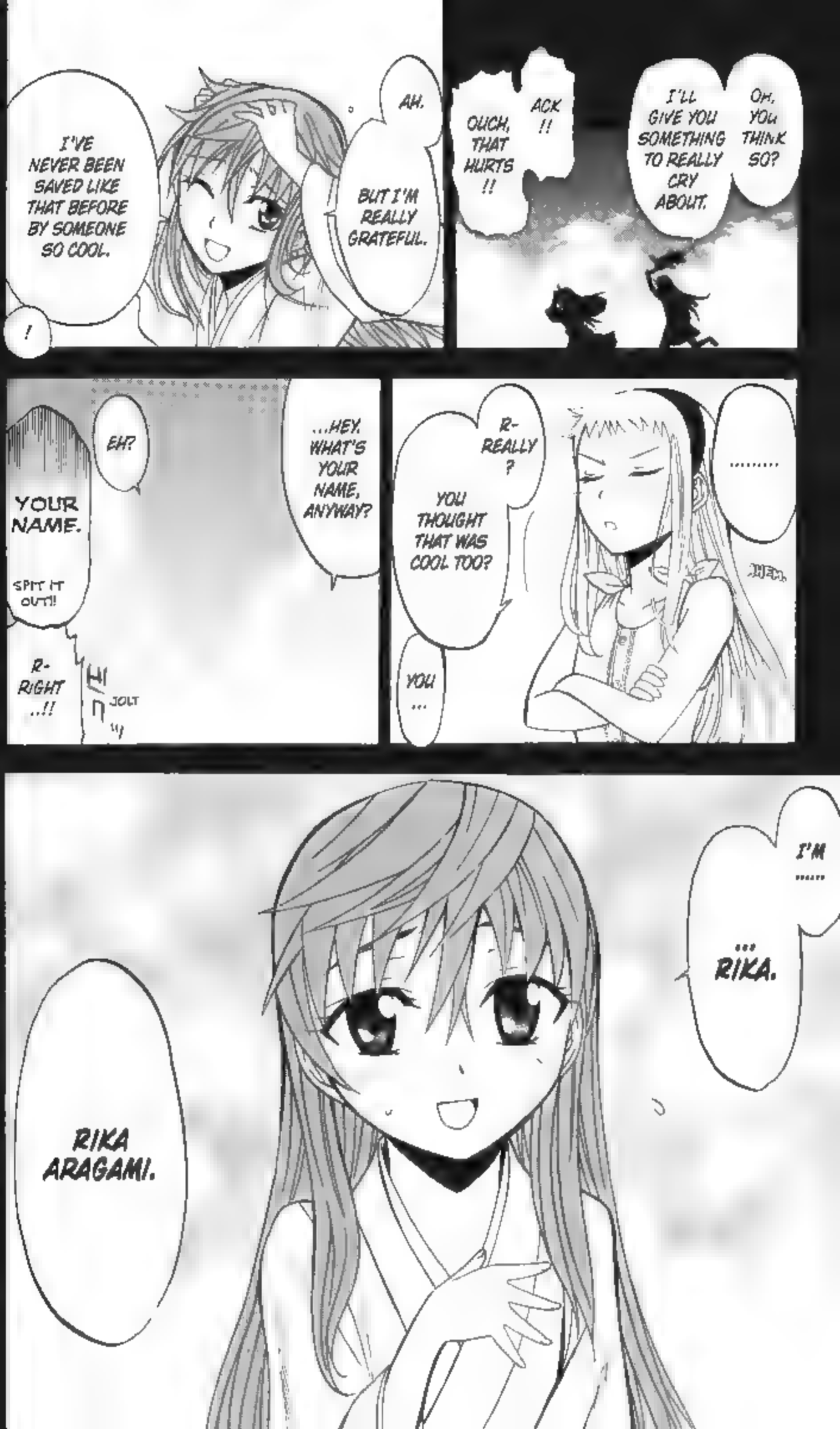


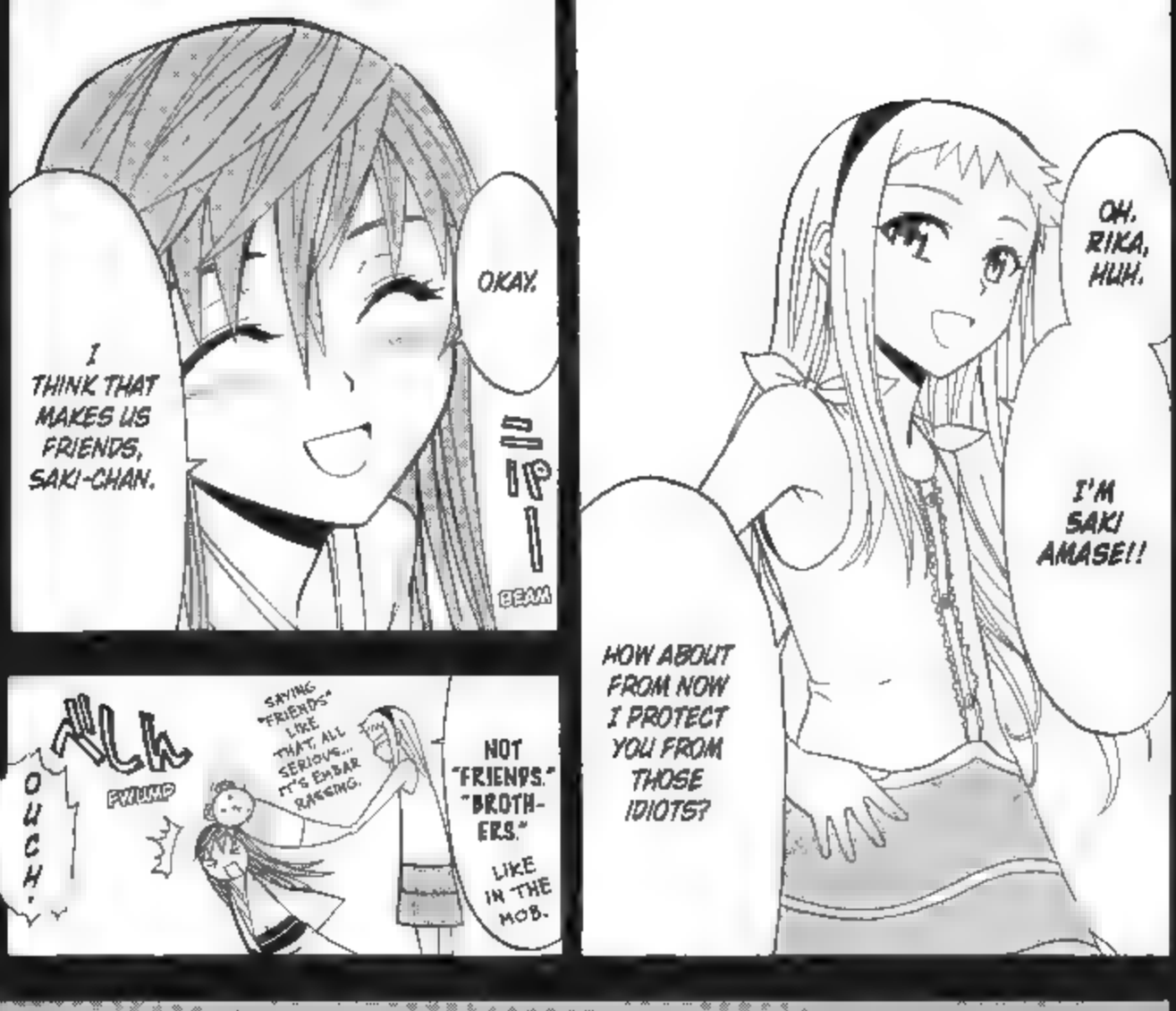
CALL SOME GHOSTS FOR HELP, WHY DON'CHA.
YOU'RE THE ARAGAMI KID, FROM THAT HAUNTED MANSION.
YOU WANT IT SO BAD? COME GET IT.
HA HA, NAH

GYAHH!
KUHAK
GMAK
UWAHH!
SO NO ONE'S GONNA COME FOR HER...
...THAT THAT FAMILY'S GOT A TON OF KIDS. HER DAD PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN KNOW HER NAME.
LOOM
SEE, MY OLD MAN TOLD ME...
WAIT.. THAT WON'T WORK

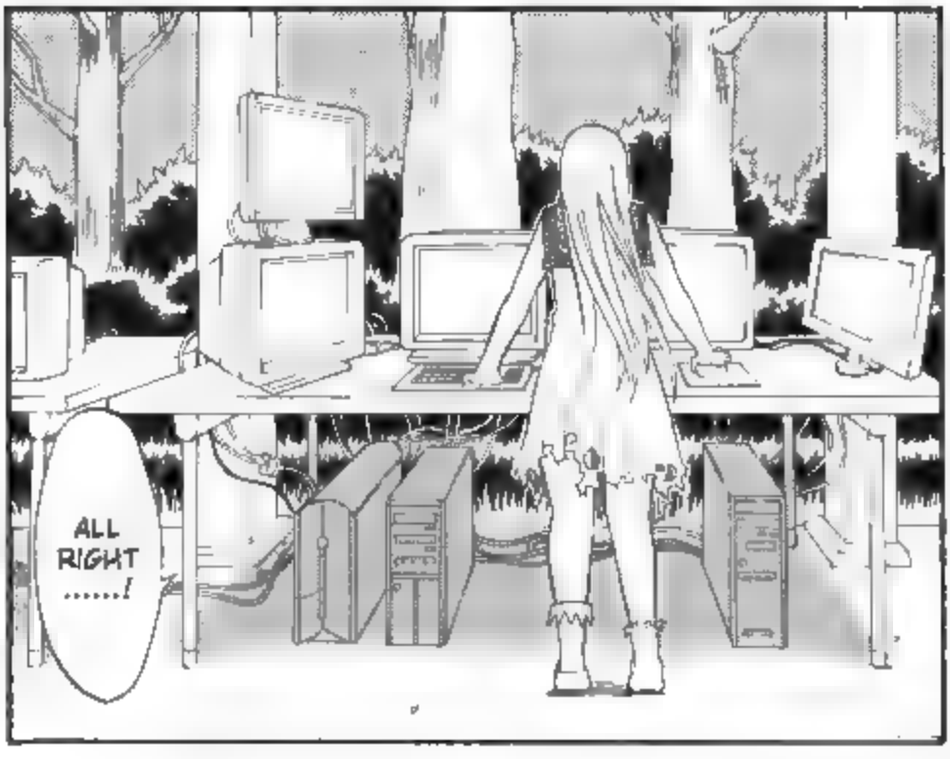
OUCH... WHAT WAS THAT?
AH.
HMPH!
IT'S YOU...
SAKI !!
DUMMIES.
DON'CHA THINK IT'S KIND OF PATHETIC FOR A COUPLE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS TO GANG UP ON A LITTLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GIRL?
YOU JERK ...!
YOU'RE JUST A FIFTH GRADER, AND YOU'RE STANDING UP TO US .....?
GROWL
WHOA. SCARY....
...!
HUH !!??
THANK YOU...
YOU SAVED ME.
CRAP WE'LL REMEMBER THIS!!
WAHHHH.
GROWL
.....
UMM .....
WHOOSH

UNREAL ...
YOU, I MEAN.
?
?
KYAHH!
べっし
FWUMP
GLARE
ゲヌロ
WHEN YOU ACT ALL WEAK AND HELPLESS IT JUST ENCOURAGES JERKS LIKE THEM!
POINT
ズビシ
CALL SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS AND FIGHT BACK NEXT TIME.
UM ...
RIGHT... BUT..... I DON'T HAVE... ANY FRIENDS .....
.....AND IT WOULD HURT.....
IF I TRIED TO PUNCH THEM..... I'D HURT MY HAND. AND MY HEART.
OUCH !!
ベルん
FWUMP
RIGHT ?

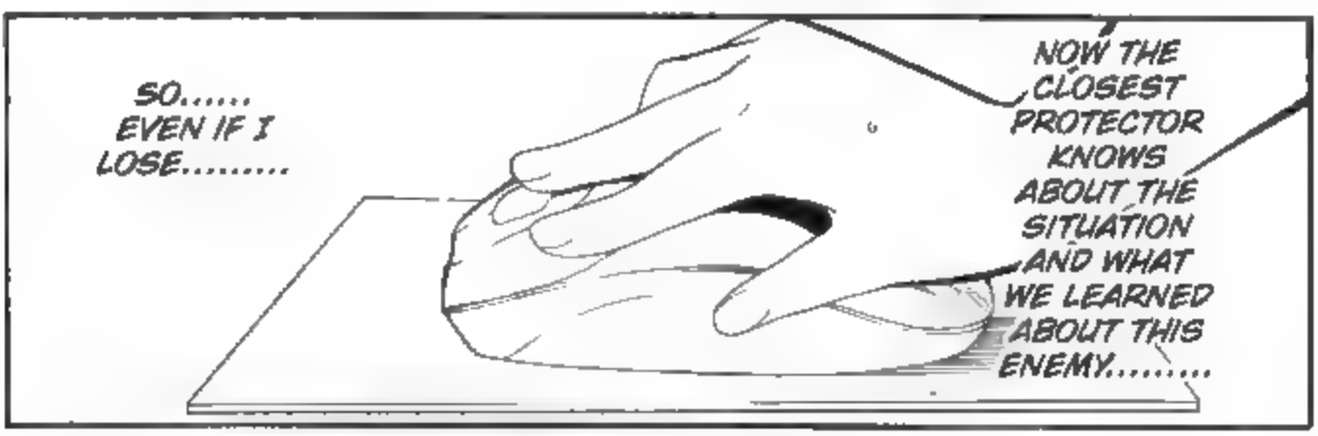

OH, YOU THINK SO?
I'LL GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO REALLY CRY ABOUT.
ACK !!
OUCH, THAT HURTS !!
AH.
BUT I'M REALLY GRATEFUL.
I'VE NEVER BEEN SAVED LIKE THAT BEFORE BY SOMEONE SO COOL.
!
.....
R-REALLY ?
YOU THOUGHT THAT WAS COOL TOO?
YOU ...
...HEY. WHAT'S YOUR NAME, ANYWAY?
EH?
YOUR NAME.
SPIT IT OUT!!
R-RIGHT ..!!
JOLT
I'M .....
...RIKA.
RIKA ARAGAMI.



DEATH 24: BONDS AND TIES

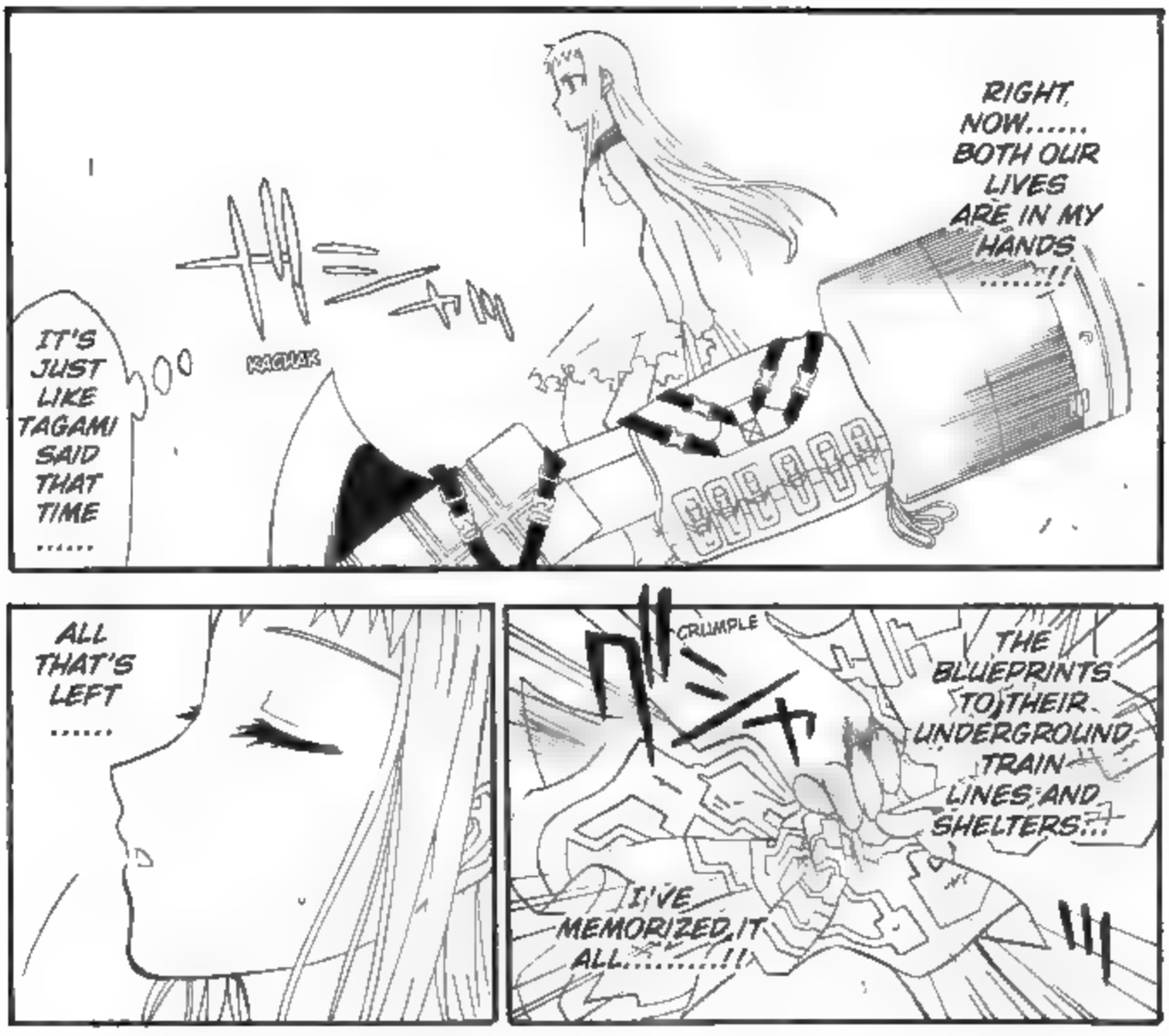

ALL RIGHT .....!

CLAK
CLAK

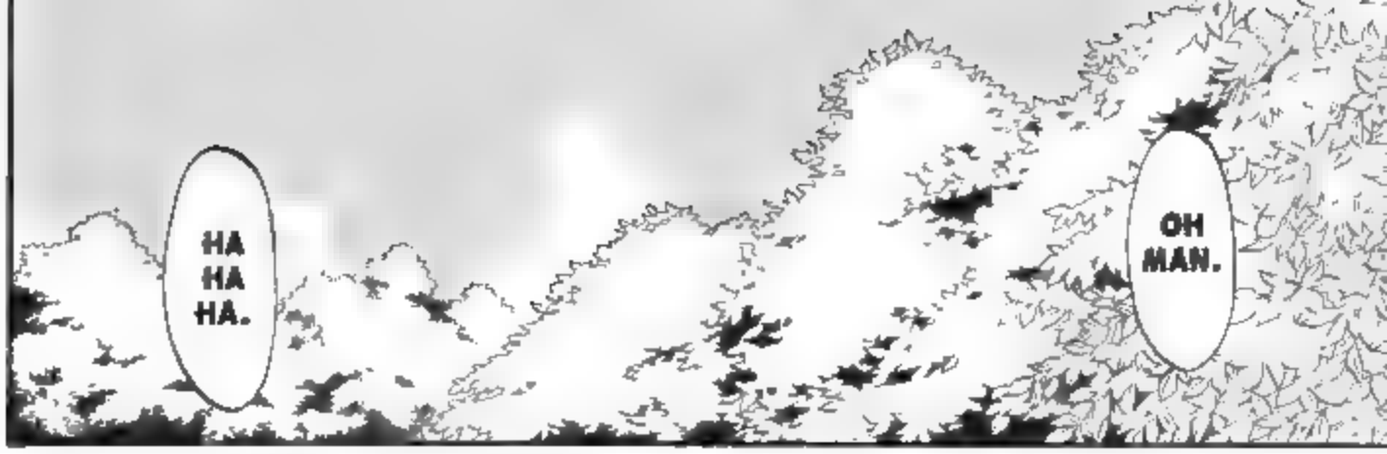

SO..... EVEN IF I LOSE.....
NOW THE CLOSEST PROTECTOR KNOWS ABOUT THE SITUATION AND WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT THIS ENEMY.....

...WOULD ALSO DIE.....!!
...IKA...

IF..... I FAIL NOW, IT WON'T JUST BE MY LIFE.
..... DUMMY!! DON'T EVEN THINK IT!!


IT'S JUST LIKE TAGAMI SAID THAT TIME .....
KACHAK
RIGHT NOW..... BOTH OUR LIVES ARE IN MY HANDS .....!!
ALL THAT'S LEFT .....
CRUMPLE
THE BLUEPRINTS TO THEIR UNDERGROUND TRAIN LINES AND SHELTERS...!!
I'VE MEMORIZED IT ALL.....!!

STEP
FIRST I'VE GOTTA CATCH UP TO THEM .....!!
..... IS TO TAKE ACTION .....!!


HA HA HA.
OH MAN.

UGH
...THESE DAMN MOUNTAIN PATHS ARE WAY ROUGHER THAN I THOUGHT .....!!
I WAS PRETTY CONFIDENT IN MY STAMINA AFTER THAT PART-TIME JOB WITH ALL ITS MANUAL LABOR, BUT.....

YOU OKAY?
GAHAA.
HAA.
GAHAA.
HAA.

LOOK, EVEN THE RABBIT'S MOCKING YOU.
AND EVEN THEN, YOU'RE STILL NOT USED TO THIS MOUNTAIN AT ALL.
FLAIL
FLAIL
GAHAA.
GAHAA.
GAHAA.
YOU'LL NEVER CATCH IT UNLESS YOU PICK UP ON THAT BOND.
IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD TO CHASE AFTER IT BLINDLY, OURI-KUN.

THAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR A CON-TRACTING MONK.
SENSING THAT INNATE BOND .....

BOND ...
.....

.....
OKAY!
HOW TO PERCEIVE THE BOND.
JUST IN CASE, LET'S REVIEW ONE MORE TIME.
FIRST, CONTROL YOUR BREATHING. THEN PUT ALL YOUR FOCUS INTO RECALLING THE TARGET OF YOUR BOND.
RIGHT .....
ONCE YOU'VE DONE THAT, IMAGINE A STRING STRETCHING FROM YOU TO THE TARGET.

FLICKER
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ
BZZ
BAM
ONCE I'VE MADE THE CON-NECTION .....
... THEN I JUST HAVE TO FOLLOW IT.....
DASH
FOUND THEM !!
THUMP

SIGH.

AHA HA.
ROGERE, YOU IDIOT.
I'M WORN OUT..... HAAA.
SHE MAY BE A YOUNG WOMAN, BUT LUGGING HER AROUND IS A CHORE .....

THAT WOULD BE A WASTE.
DON'T BE RASH.
..... HEH.

IT HONESTLY WOULD'VE BEEN MUCH EASIER TO KILL HER THERE AND THEN.
TAKING HER WITH US LIKE THAT...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING.

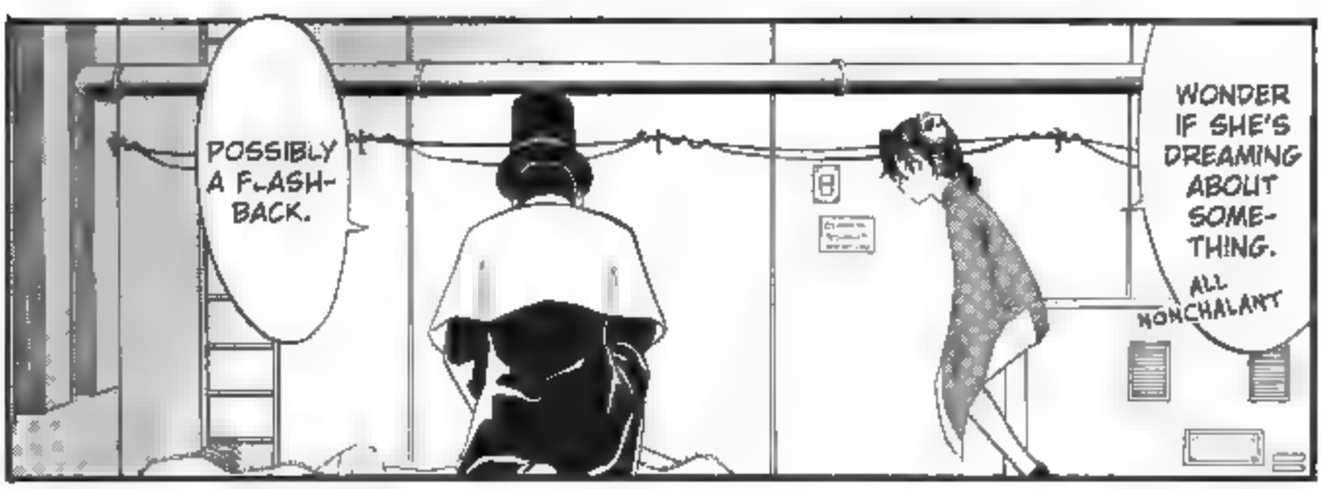
IT'S TRUE— A LIVING HUMAN IS ALWAYS IN DANGER OF DYING.
BUT EVEN IF IT BECOMES A SHIKABANE ...
...IT CAN NEVER TRULY RETURN TO LIFE.
SLIP
ZIP
HAA ... HAA.
..... HAA.
IT'S FAR PREFERABLE TO KEEP HER ALIVE, IF POSSIBLE.
STICK
PEEL
AND DEAD'S DEAD. IT'S ALL OVER, THEN.

I MEAN..... WE FINISHED OUR TASK OF MESSING UP THE PULSE LINE, SO I GUESS IT'S OKAY . ...
RIGHT ?
.....
BUT ALL YOUR LITTLE STOPS TO PATCH HER UP ARE MAKING US LATE GETTING BACK.
WELL ...
ACK.
HMPH.
A VOODOO HOUNGAN AND A DOCTOR. MAKES SENSE.

GUH !!
GRIN
..... SURE.
HOW ABOUT YOU MAKE ONE FOR ME TOO, ROGERE ?
ONE OF MY SPECIAL SILVER RINGS.
LIKE AKASHA.

...KEEPING UP MY STOCK OF SILVER RINGS IS EXPENSIVE.
KIND OF LIMITING HOW THEY GET BROKEN AFTER ONE USE.
WISH I HAD A WAY TO FIX 'EM.
GRUMBLE
MY CURSE IS PERFECT, BUT...

SHE WAKE UP?
OR IS SHE DEAD?
... NO
JUST SLEEPING.
HAA .....
UHH .....
OH?


POSSIBLY A FLASH-BACK.
WONDER IF SHE'S DREAMING ABOUT SOME-THING.
ALL NONCHALANT

THAT'S WHAT'S TYPICALLY REFERRED TO AS A FLASHBACK .....
HAPPY ONES, SAD ONES— THEY ALL RUSH BACK.
BEING ON THE VERGE OF DEATH CAUSES HUMANS TO RECALL ALL SORTS OF VIVID MEMORIES.

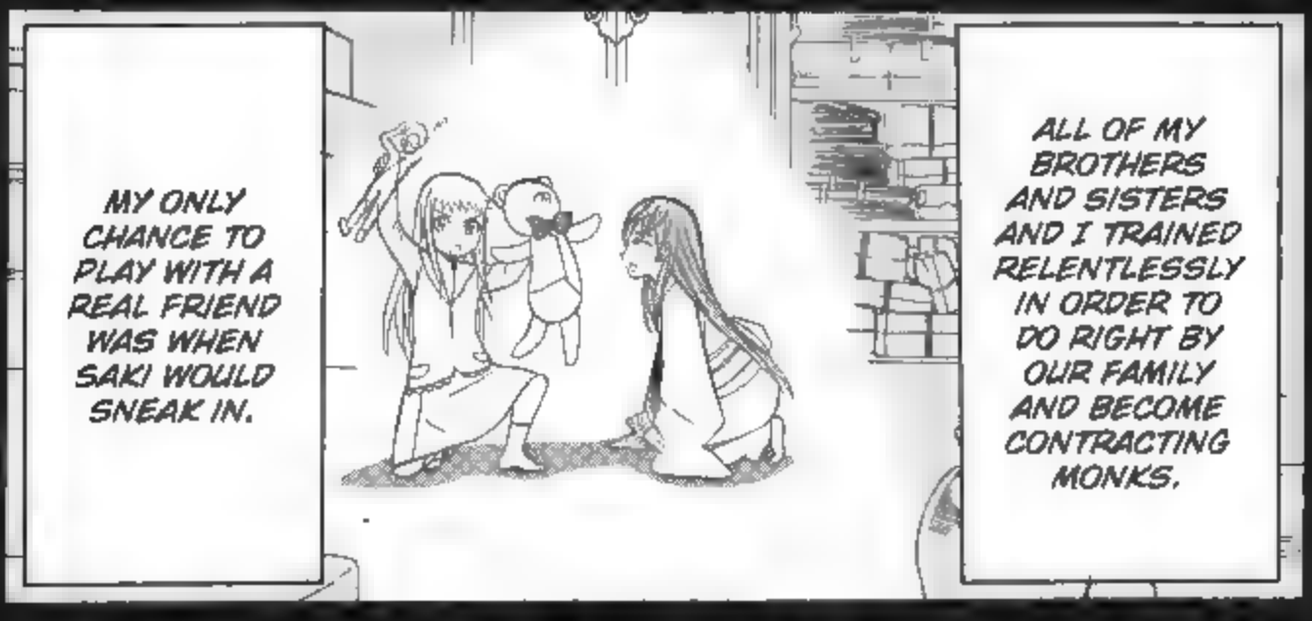
HAA.
HAA.
HAA.
...A SLIDESHOW OF HER ENTIRE LIFE.
FROM BIRTH TO PRESENT.
WHAT THE YOUNG MISS'S HEAVILY DAMAGED BODY IS SHOWING HER, INSIDE HER HEAD, IS...

HAA .....
SA... KI.
..... TCH ...
SA ...

IN THAT SENSE, SAKI WAS MY FIRST AND ONLY FRIEND.
SAKI AND I BECAME GOOD FRIENDS, AFTER THAT.
KAPOW.
WHOOSH. PEW PEW PEW.

NOOO. I MEAN .....
THIS ISN'T THE RIGHT WAY TO PLAY HOUSE, SAKI-CHAN.
HMPH.
.....OUT FOR REVENGE FOR HIS FAMILY, DADDY ENTERED THE JUNGLE.....
INTENSE BULLET STORM!!
DADDY
EHHH!?
CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS "BROTHER" THING?
LET'S GO, BROTH-ER.
SHOCK
BUT ISN'T THIS HOW BOYS USUALLY DO IT?
EHH...
SURE IT IS, DUMMY. IT'S MUCH MORE FUN THIS WAY.
EEK !!
OH? SO YOU'D RATHER PLAY THAT GAME WHERE WE TIE YOUR SKIRT UP LIKE A BALLOON AND YOU START CRYING?
.....
.....PLAYING HOUSE IS FINE
TWITCH
LOOM

INSIDE THE OLDEST STORE-HOUSE ON MY FAMILY'S PROPERTY ...
AHA HA.
THAT WAS OUR SECRET PLAY AREA.
TEE HEE.


ALL OF MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS AND I TRAINED RELENTLESSLY IN ORDER TO DO RIGHT BY OUR FAMILY AND BECOME CONTRACTING MONKS.
MY ONLY CHANCE TO PLAY WITH A REAL FRIEND WAS WHEN SAKI WOULD SNEAK IN.

SLIDE
RIKA-SAN.
MAY I HAVE A WORD?

KNOCK
KNOCK
BUT THEN ...

!!
AH.
JOLT
CRUD !!

AH ...
YES.
WHAT IS IT?
HMPH.
ABOUT YOUR SCHEDULE FOR THE AFTERNOON ...
AFTER TWO HOURS OF MEDITATION, YOU WILL COPY SUTRAS.
AFTER DINNER COMES ESOTERIC TRAINING.
OKAY .....
UNDER-STOOD.
.....
BY THE WAY, RIKA-SAN.
WHAT EXACTLY... IS THIS TOY?
SO VERY ODD...
AH.
DON'T TELL ME ...
...THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN COMING TO THIS STOREHOUSE FOR MENTAL TRAINING...
...BUT INSTEAD, TO PLAY WITH THAT AMASE GIRL AGAIN?

.....
WELL? IS THAT THE CASE?
.....
NO.
I HAVEN'T BEEN... PLAYING WITH HER .....
.....AS I'M SURE YOU'RE AWARE ...
...YOU ARE A CHILD OF THE ESTEEMED ARAGAMI LINE, ONE OF THE KOUGON SECT'S TEN GREAT HOLY FAMILIES.
YOU LEAD A SPECIAL LIFE, UNLIKE THAT OF OTHER CHILDREN.
IF THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY RECOGNIZES YOUR EFFORTS, YOU MAY EVEN GET TO MEET.
I..... UNDER-STAND.
.....

THE RULES OF THE ARAGAMI FAMILY WOULDN'T EVEN ALLOW ME THAT ONE, SMALL FRIENDSHIP.
SAKI DIDN'T COME AROUND MUCH ANYMORE, AND ALL I HAD LEFT OF HER WERE MEMORIES.
BUT THEN..... ONE SUMMER NIGHT, THE FOLLOWING YEAR...
BOOM
BOOM
SLIDE
WAAK
IT DOESN'T SEEM..... LIKE I CAN GO TO THE FESTIVAL THIS YEAR EITHER .....
FIRE-WORKS . . . .
!
SAKI-CHAN!
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
HELLO, BROTHER.

I KNOW YOU CAN'T LEAVE HERE, OR WHATEVER.
BUT IT'D BE PRETTY SAD IF YOU HAD NO FUN TONIGHT..... WELL?
Y-YEAH !!
HEY, RIKA.
FUN SPARKLERS
CHECK IT OUT.
SO PRETTY.
YEAH.
I'M SO HAPPY .....
HUH?
I THOUGHT I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN, SAKI-CHAN .....
SO IT REALLY MAKES ME HAPPY..... THAT WE CAN ENJOY THIS TOGETHER
RIGHT
BECAUSE... WE'RE FRIENDS, AFTER ALL.

WHOA ...
CRUD. THAT LADY. THIS IS BAD ...!!
GRAB
!!
AH, SAKI-CHAN. ...IT'S HER!!
AH! OVER THERE !!
UM. UM...
I'VE GOT ALL THESE SPARKLERS AND JUNK!
...HIDE WHERE !?
YOU HAVE TO HIDE .....
HAA.
HAA.
AH ..... OKAY.
KNOCK KNOCK
RIKA-SAN?
YOU'RE IN THERE, RIGHT? I'M COMING IN.
HAA.
HAA.

RIKA-SAN..... WHAT WERE YOU DOING?
I..... UH...
JUST LOOKING SOMETHING UP...
HERE IN THIS STORE-HOUSE .....?
UMM... YES.
LEAP
...!!
JOLT
SIZZLE 41! 41!!!

...DID I JUST HEAR?
WHAT ...
!
..
POP
NOTHING
.....UM.
HAA.
FSSHH
HAA.
HAA.
OR.. I LL NEVER BE ABLE TO SEE RIKA AGAIN .....
BUT..... I HAVE TO KEEP QUIET .....
IT..... IT..... HURTS.
TCH.
~~~
W- WATER .....
~~~!!
CRACKLE
104
104
104
CRACKLE
CRACKLE

EH ..... !
IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU UNDER-STAND...
THEN WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO SEND YOU AWAY TO MT. GORYOU.
I'LL TELL YOU ONCE MORE.
YOU DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO PLAY WITH ORDINARY CHILDREN.
RIPPLE
PAT
PAT
PAT
FWUMP
THAT MOUNTAIN IS SECLUDED, AWAY FROM THE SECULAR WORLD.
AND NATURALLY, THAT CHILD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO FOLLOW YOU DEEP INTO THE MOUNTAINS IN ANOTHER PREFECTURE.
I ... ... CAN'T PUT IT OUT ...!!
BADUM
.....
FLAPE
!! KYAHH.

!!
TWITCH
!
WHAT'S COMING FROM THAT CABINET?
SMOKE!
SNIFF
SNIFF
.....WHAT ON EARTH IS THAT SMELL?
CREAK
WHOOSH
PLEASE WAIT!! WAIT .....
ARE YOU HIDING HER IN THERE?
STEP
.....IS SHE IN THERE?
EH... NO, IT'S JUST .....
FLIK
BOOM
POP
POP
POP
POP
POP
!?
GYAHH!
KYAHH...
THUMP

BOOM
FLIK
FLIK
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
S-SAKI-CHAN IS...
WHOOSH
FOOM
WHH..
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
G...
GYAHH!
FLIK
FLIK
WON'T GO OU...
...OUT
!!
RIKA-SAN.
SA...
GET BA...
SNAP
CRACK
CRACK

!!
CRASH
NOOO!
SAKI-CHAN...
GRAB
SAKI.....
SAKI!!
BOOM

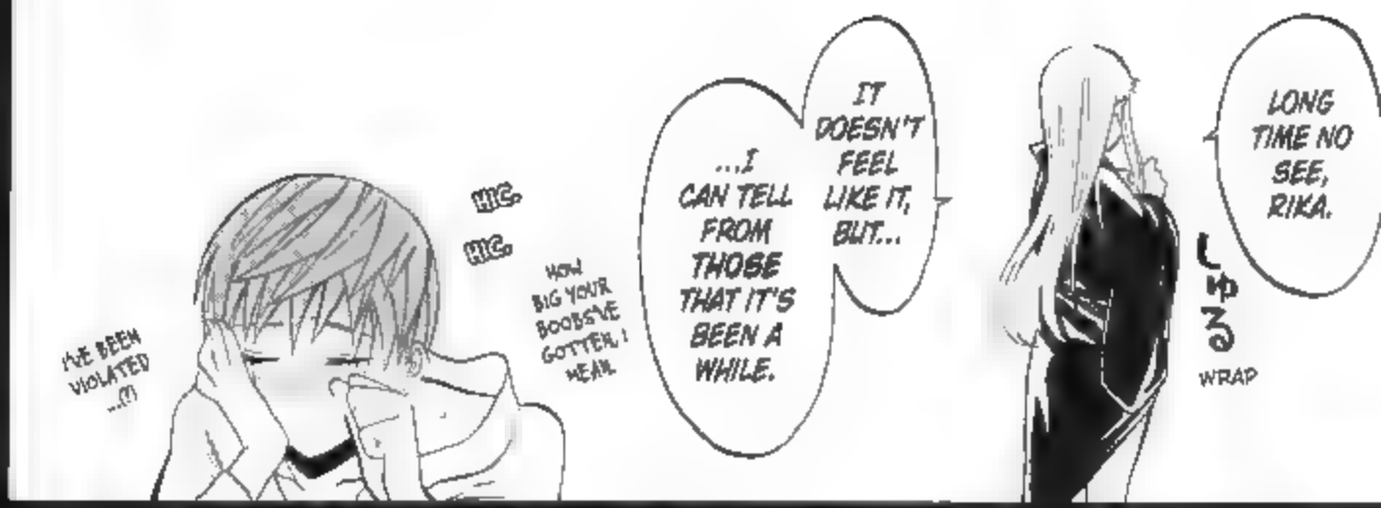
BACK THEN..... I WAS SO YOUNG..... AND FOOLISH .....
AND POWERLESS .....
I GOT AWAY WITH SOME BURNT HAIR AND NOTHING MORE .....
BUT... SAKI...
HAA.
HAA.
HAA.
...!
SAKI-CHAN ...
IT'S OKAY .....
I'M... RIGHT HERE .....
RIKA .....
WHERE ARE YOU .....?
HAA .....
RIKA .....
SORRY ...
IT'S ALL BECAUSE..... I SAID WE SHOULD..... PLAY WITH SPARKLERS.
HAA
HAA
.....!
IT'S OKAY .....
IT'S OKAY..... SAKI-CHAN.

HEY..... RIKA...
I THINK I'M...
WHAT IS IT?
... GONNA... DIE.
WHAT !!
DON'T EVEN... SAY THAT .....
REALLY .....
HAA.
I WANT TO SAY..... "I'M JUST FINE" .....
IF IT WOULD... MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER .....
BUT... IT'S NOT TRUE.
I'M SCARED.
MY ARMS AND LEGS ARE BURNING UP.
TREMBLE
BUT MY BODY IS COLD. SO COLD.....
HAA ...
NO...
DON'T WANNA GO...
NOT LIKE THIS..... NO.....
HAA.

HELP.
HELP ...ME.
PLEASE .....
RIKA ...
SAKI ...
SHUDDER
WITH THE STRENGTH AND FREEDOM I DIDN'T HAVE, SHE WAS A FRIEND I COULD LOOK UP TO
SO WHEN ...
...I SAW SAKI LYING THERE, DYING, I FORGOT HOW TO CRY AND JUST WENT NUMB.
AND I MADE A DECISION.

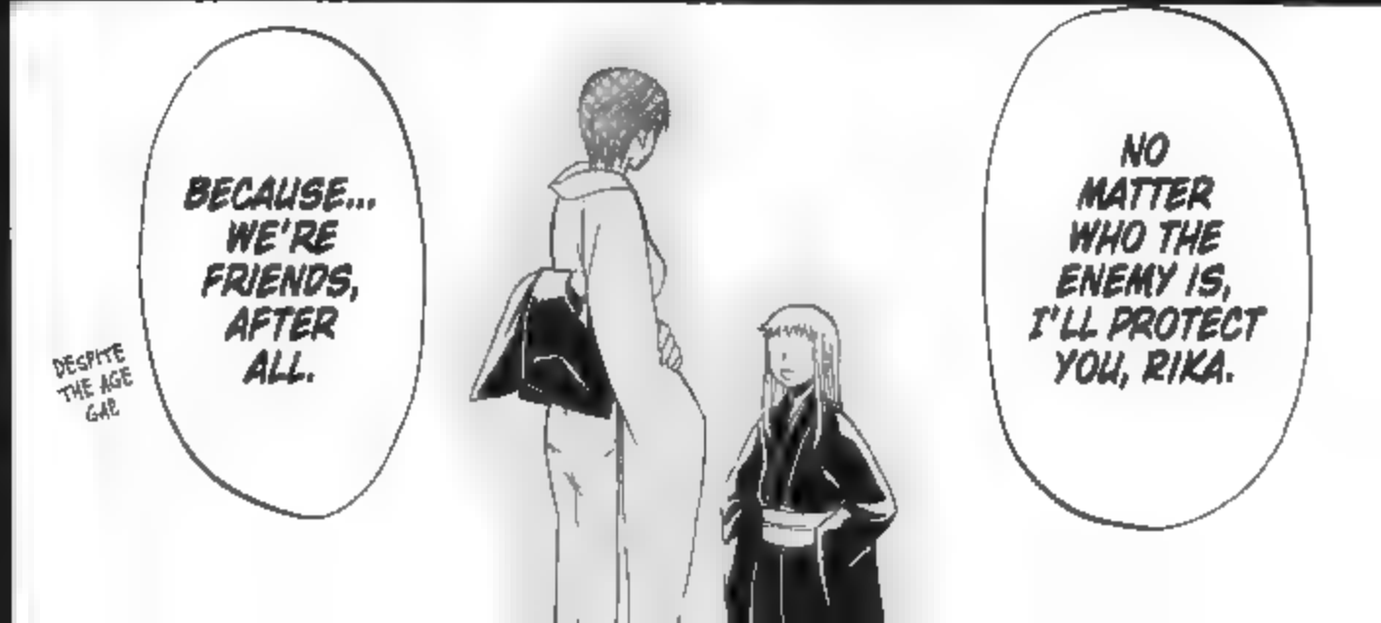
RIKA-SAMA ...!
SEAL: MANTRA OF LIGHT PENTACHROMATIC SEAL
... FOR MAKING A CORPSE PRINCESS FROM A BODY THAT'S BEEN IN CRYOGENIC PRESERVATION FOR TEN YEARS.....
THERE'S NO PRECE-DENT...
CAN YOU REALLY DO THIS?
STEP
SAKI.....
BUT..... I'VE ALREADY DECIDED.
YES..... I KNOW THAT.
...I'LL BE THE ONE TO SAVE YOU!!
THIS TIME...
AS SOON AS I KNEW SHE HAD THE APTITUDE TO BECOME A CORPSE PRINCESS ...

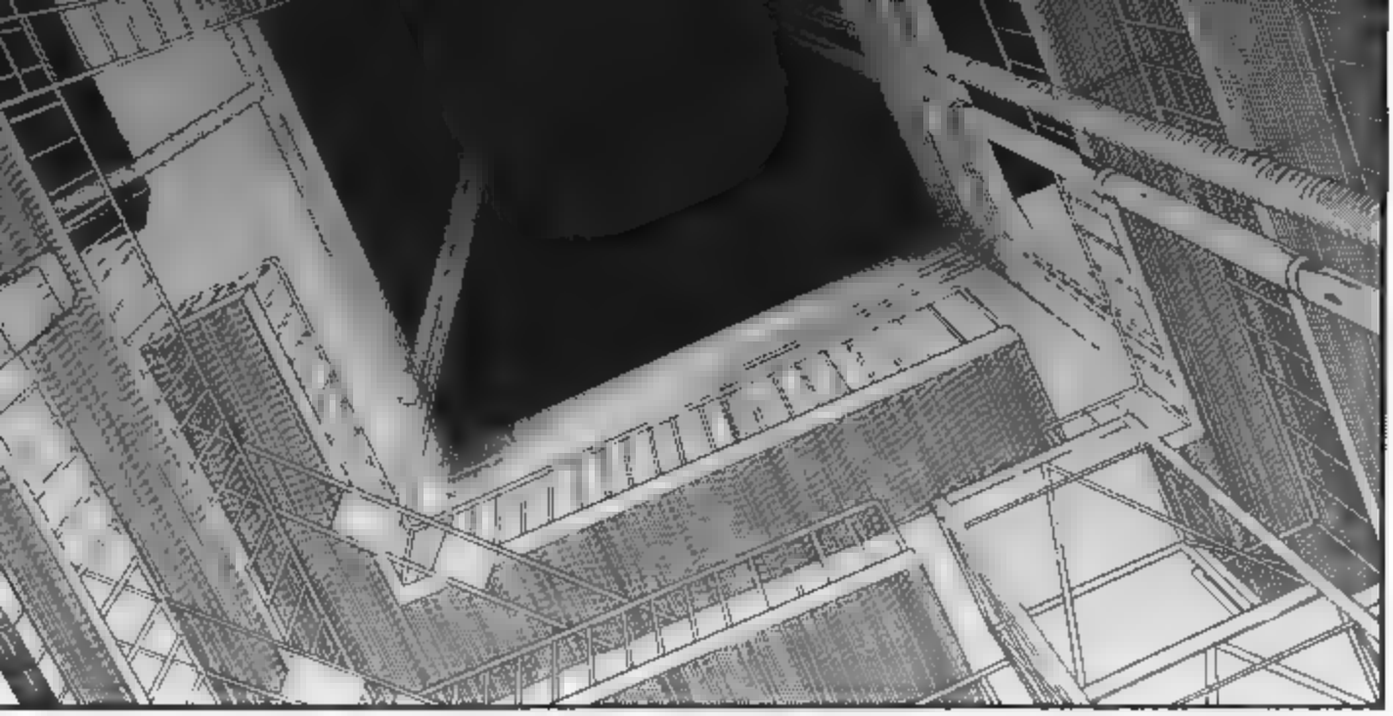
OM
GLOW
FSSSHHH
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
..... NNN.
SNIFFLE
..... RIKA?
...!!
SA..... KI.....
...EH?
SQUEEZE
...
I.....
IT REALLY WORKED .....!!
HUG
OH, SAKI !!
THANK GOOD-NESS !!
AH, AH.
STOP ..... AH.
SQUISH
SQUISH
SAKI !!
SQUISH
H...
HOLD ON.....


LONG TIME NO SEE, RIKA.
WRAP
IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE IT, BUT...
...I CAN TELL FROM THOSE THAT IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
HOW BIG YOUR BOOBS'VE GOTTEN, I MEAN.
HIC.
HIC.
I'VE BEEN VIOLATED ...!!

YES ...
I'M SORRY, SAKI...
I DID MY BEST, BUT..... IT'S BEEN TEN WHOLE YEARS SINCE THEN.....
THAT'S OKAY.
THANKS.

NOW IT'S MY TURN.
CLENCH
CLENCH
RIKA, BACK WHEN I DIED...
...I REMEMBER. YOU WERE SO GOOD TO ME.


NO MATTER WHO THE ENEMY IS, I'LL PROTECT YOU, RIKA.
BECAUSE... WE'RE FRIENDS, AFTER ALL.
DESPITE THE AGE GAP.



.....
BREATHE
スー

HOW MANY?
!
カン
SENSE
HEY.
I THINK SOMEONE'S COMING.

RUSTLE
RIGHT.
..... BEFORE THAT...
BUT WE'D BETTER PREPARE TO LEAVE THIS PLACE AND MOVE ON.
JUST IN CASE.
HMM..... I ONLY FEEL A SMALL PRESENCE .....

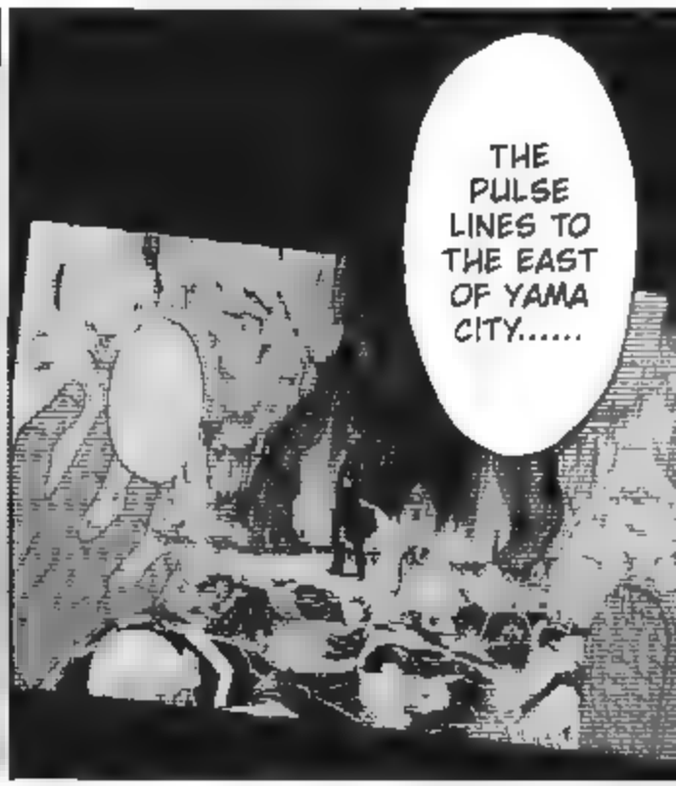
I THOUGHT I WOULD DO IT ONCE WE RETURNED, BUT...
...I'D BE IN TROUBLE IF ANYONE INTERFERED AND NOTICED IT.
SNAP
GROUND-WORK.
EWW. GROSS.
WUZZAT?
NAB
THRASH
SQUEAL
SQUEAL
WIGGLE
SQUIRM
SLIP
SQUEAL
NO MORE GROSS STUFF, OKAY?
HEY, RO-GERE.
IT CAN'T BE HELPED.
SO NOW SHE CHOOSES TO WAKE UP?
WHOOPS
TWITCH
TCH.
HUH!?

FSSSHHH
SMOKE ...?
NO..... JUST STEAM FROM THAT BURST WATER PIPE .....?
!?
BOOM
BURST
RO-GERE.
SHE'S COMING THIS WAY.
.....!! HEY, HEY, DON'T STRAIN YOURSELF NOW, YOUNG MISS.
NO SENSE IN SHORTENING YOUR OWN LIFE.
STRUGGLE
STRUGGLE
TCH .....
.....
FWISH
FWISH
FWISH
IT MAKES SENSE. THAT LITTLE GIRL...
...HAS COME FOR HER DEAR FRIEND.
FWIP
SCREE!
SHE'S MORE DES-PERATE THAN BEFORE
YOU'LL BE EASIER TO PROTECT IF YOU'RE CLOSE.
I BET SHE'LL HIDE IN THE STEAM BEFORE ATTACK-ING.
OHH?
OH ...

!!
BAM
WHOA !!
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
WHAM
FWISH
WHOOP-SIE!
TCH ..... SO MANY.
.....!
WHOOSH
!
I'M HERE FOR HER, LEE LI HONG!!
HERE TO TAKE BACK MY FRIEND.
.....!!
TMP

ZOOM
.....SAKI!
I MADE A PROMISE.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS..... I'LL ALWAYS PROTECT RIKA!!
FU FU.
GOOD JOB CATCHING UP.
BUT AFTER YOUR LIFE WAS SPARED, SO LUCKILY... ♡
WHAT A SHAME.
FWOOSH
IF YOU'RE REALLY SO EAGER ...
...THEN I'LL BE HAPPY TO TAKE YOU TOO.
FOOM
BACK TO NARAKU.

...AS WELL AS THOSE TO THE WEST HAVE BEEN SEALED OFF.

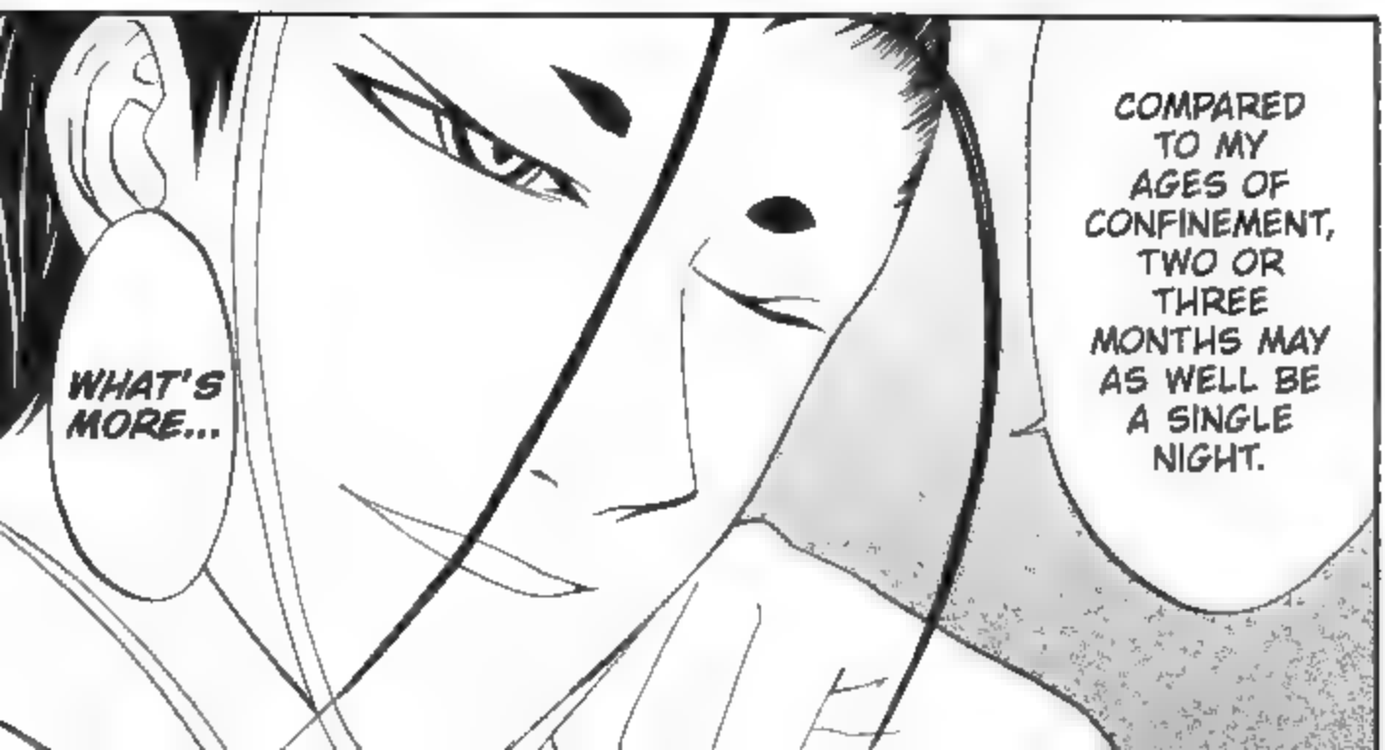

THE PULSE LINES TO THE EAST OF YAMA CITY.....

YES.
AND HOW LONG BEFORE THAT HAPPENS ?

WE NEED ONLY WAIT UNTIL YAMA CITY'S PULSE LINES ARE MUDDIED AND IMPURE. THEN WE INVADE.
LEE LI HONG IS ENGAGED WITH A PURSUER TO THE NORTH, BUT I'VE BEEN TOLD THE PULSE LINE THERE IS ALSO SEALED.

PROBABLY.. TWO OR THREE MONTHS.
...IT SHOULDN'T TAKE LONG AT ALL.
THAT DEPENDS HEAVILY ON WHAT HAPPENS FROM HERE ON, BUT...

I FOR-GIVE THEM.
IT'S FINE.
AND THAT LI HONG. WHAT'S SHE PLAYING AT...!?
YOU TAKING YOUR SWEET TIME, HUH .....


WHAT'S MORE...
COMPARED TO MY AGES OF CONFINEMENT, TWO OR THREE MONTHS MAY AS WELL BE A SINGLE NIGHT.

I AM TITILLATED TO MY VERY CORE.
LIKE A YOUNGSTER WAITING FOR THE COMPLETION OF HIS NEW PLAYTHING .....
Corpse Princess 5 End

CORPSE PRINCESS PRODUCTION HELPERS
-SAKANO-SAN
-OOSUMI-SAN
-KATOU-SAN
-YOSHIOKA-SAN
-MARK-TSUAN

EMERGENCY HELPERS
-MEGUMI-SAN
-KAWASHITA-SAN
-IMAOKA-SAN
-NIJOU-TSUAN

SUPERVISOR
-SHIMIZU

AND THANKS TO ALL THE READERS OUT THERE!

HEY, HEY. I JUST NOTICED THAT THAT ROYAL THRONE POPPED UP ALL OF A SUDDEN. HOW'D YOU MAKE THAT HAPPEN?
THE MORNING AFTER, I USED MY BIZARRE LOTUS TO BUILD IT.
THANK GOODNESS WE HAD SOME CARPENTER SHIKABANE TO HELP.

"LIKE A YOUNGSTER WAITING FOR THE COMPLETION OF HIS NEW PLAYTHING," SO SAYS MA'EN SUGAMI OF THE UNCLEAN BUNCH, THE REVIVED DEMON LORD AND ULTIMATE EVIL ENTITY. THE DIE IS CAST, THE EARTH IS BEFOULED, AND THE UNCLEAN BUNCH'S KING BIDES HIS TIME BEFORE INVADING. MEANWHILE, OURI CONTINUES TO STRUGGLE. THE YOUNG CONTRACTING MONK HAS NO SKILLS—ONLY HIS CORPSE PRINCESS, MAKINA. THEIR TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

SHIKABANE KILLS NEEDED FOR CORPSE PRINCESS MAKINA HOSHIMURA TO ASCEND TO HEAVEN: 95

9 volume COMING SOON

CORPSE PRINCESS

AKAHITO YOSHIICHI

ITSUKI YAMAGAMI

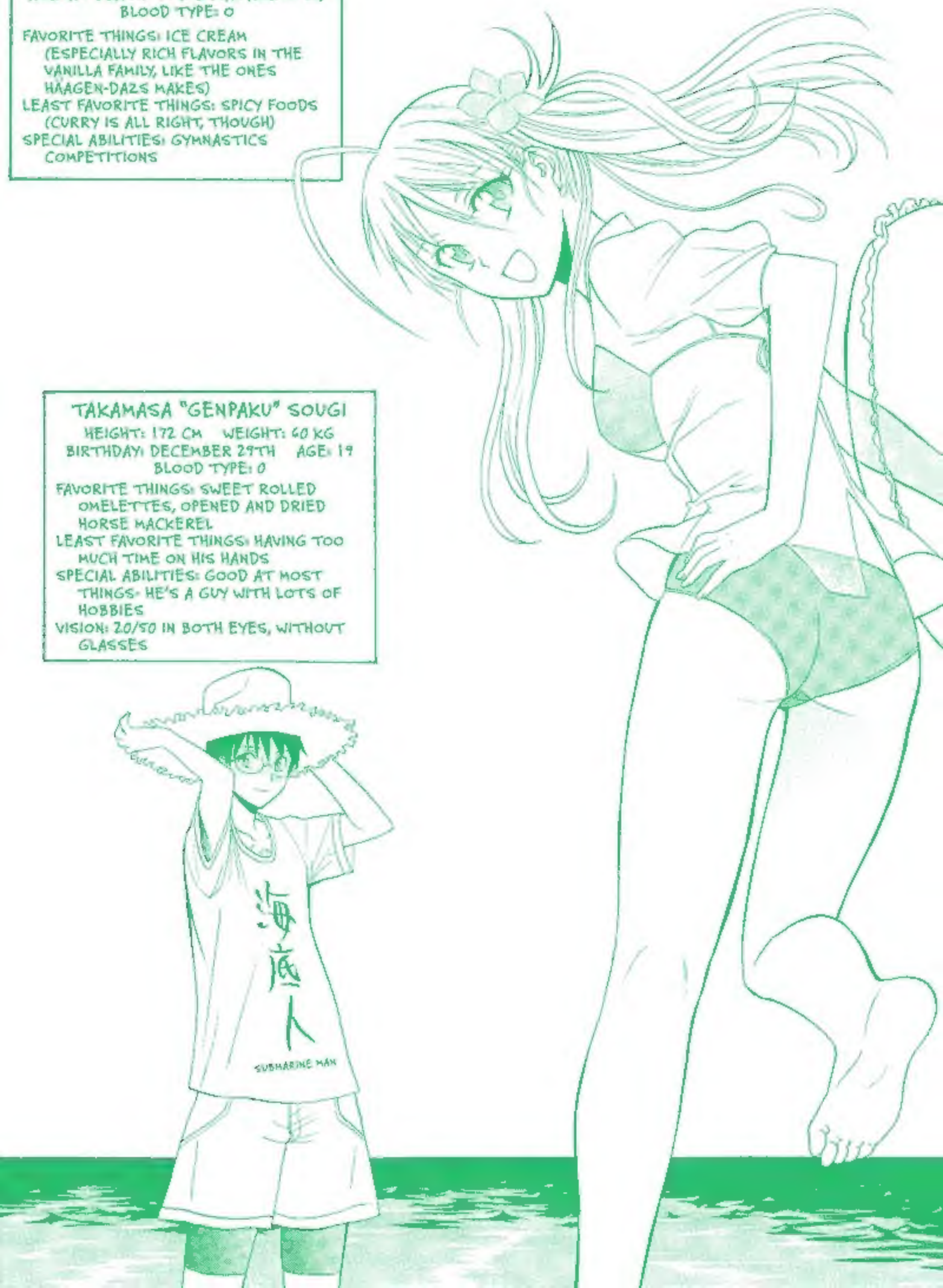
HEIGHT: 154 CM WEIGHT: 44 KG
BIRTHDAY: MARCH 18TH
AGE: AT DEATH- 16 (MENTAL AGE IS 18)
BLOOD TYPE: O

FAVORITE THINGS: ICE CREAM (ESPECIALLY RICH FLAVORS IN THE VANILLA FAMILY, LIKE THE ONES HÄAGEN-DAZS MAKES)
LEAST FAVORITE THINGS: SPICY FOODS (CURRY IS ALL RIGHT, THOUGH)
SPECIAL ABILITIES: GYMNASTICS COMPETITIONS

TAKAMASA "GENPAKU" SOUGI

HEIGHT: 172 CM WEIGHT: 60 KG
BIRTHDAY: DECEMBER 29TH AGE: 19
BLOOD TYPE: O

FAVORITE THINGS: SWEET ROLLED OMELETTES, OPENED AND DRIED HORSE MACKEREL
LEAST FAVORITE THINGS: HAVING TOO MUCH TIME ON HIS HANDS
SPECIAL ABILITIES: GOOD AT MOST THINGS- HE'S A GUY WITH LOTS OF HOBBIES
VISION: 20/50 IN BOTH EYES, WITHOUT GLASSES



TRANSLATION NOTES

OVERALL

Japanese Buddhism has a complex ranking system for its monks called *soukan* (*sou* meaning "monk," and *kan* implying hierarchy). Monks in this story often address each other by rank.

PAGE 37

"Namaskar" and the more commonly heard "namaste" are traditional greetings of Sanskrit origin in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. Here, the original Japanese overlays a literal "good evening" with the phonetics for "namaskar."

PAGE 39

The jiangshi is a mythical vampire/zombie-like creature in Chinese folklore. It absorbs the life force of living victims and moves by hopping around.

PAGE 63

Chinzei Hachirou Tametomo (also known simply as Minamoto no Tametomo) was a real-life samurai who lived in 12th century Japan. He was known as a powerful archer who – like many particularly prolific samurai – has become a legendary figure to whom practically supernatural feats have been attributed.

PAGE 66

The kanji in "Ma'en Sugami" literally mean "demon-bond, curse-god," so Akasha immediately understands the significance of the name.

PAGE 94

Gohei rice cakes, dried sweetfish, and hida beef are all regional specialties of Gifu prefecture, and Gero Onsen is one of Japan's three most famous hot springs. Li Hong is essentially a walking guidebook for Gifu!

PAGE 101

The Japanese school year starts in March or April, so unlike in the West, summer vacation is just a break between terms/semesters.

PAGE 115

Umehara's ZENBUNOSE figure is the "maiko" – or apprentice geiko (variety of geisha) – version. Maiko and geiko traditionally operate in Kyoto, which is located in the Kinki (or Kansai) region of Japan, making the figure a region-exclusive variety.

CORPSE PRINCESS 5

Yoshiichi Akahito

Translation: Caleb D. Cook
Lettering: Bianca Pistillo

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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